

IN THESE TIMES

Doris Lessing's
space fiction

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VOL. 7, NO. 26

JUNE 1-14, 1983

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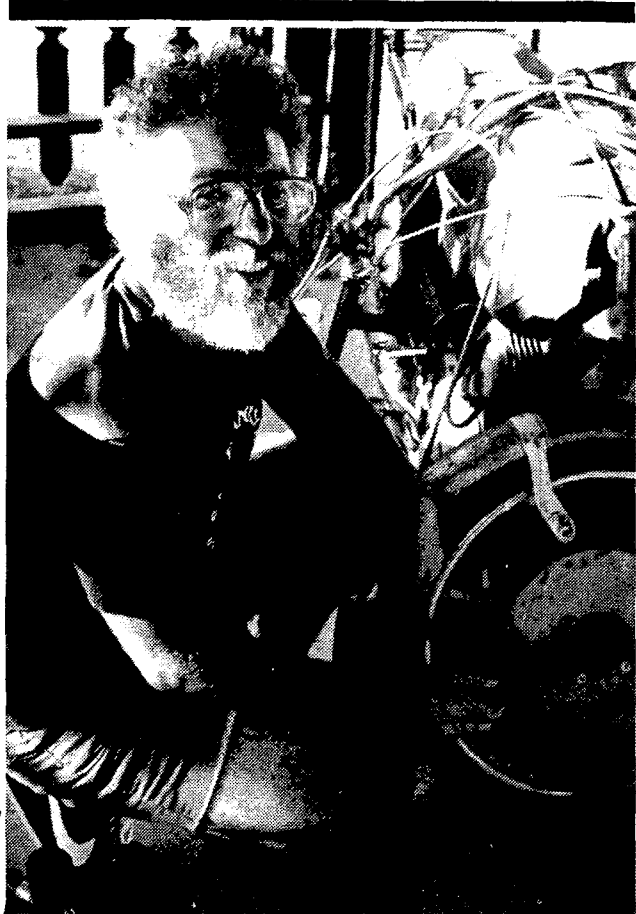
Labour

Will skilled
workers back
the Tories
June 9?
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Illustration: © Al Brunetta

Lucy Lippard on '30s art ■ Page 20

THE INSIDE STORY



David Moberg

Michael Rotkin, Santa Cruz's first socialist mayor.

Local left leaders: Is reform enough?

By David Moberg

In 1912 there were 79 Socialist mayors and a larger number of Democratic and Republican reform mayors throughout the U.S. A year later a bright young Socialist named Walter Lippmann, after a year as aide to the new Socialist mayor of Schenectady, N.Y., chastised Socialist Party mayors for not being sufficiently socialist and too much like any other reformer. Ironically, shortly afterward Lippmann himself turned reformer, abandoning socialism.

Such a string of victories and such criticism would seem luxurious to the left today in the U.S., when the number of mayors who are openly socialist or of related politics, such as "economic democracy," can be counted on one hand. But after surveying the experiences in three cities—Santa Monica, Santa Cruz and Burlington (*In These Times*, Jan. 12, Jan. 26, March 23)—it is worth asking what leftists can do once they're in office. Is it mere reformism? If so, is mere reformism acceptable?

First, it's important to recognize that the left can win. "A lot of times the left doesn't even try," argues Derek Shearer, an organizer of the Santa Monica successes. "It's not that people have run and lost. They haven't even run." Running and losing is usually a first step toward running and winning. But even more important, these victories have been preceded by several years of careful organizing on important local issues—rent control in Santa Monica, environmental protection in Santa Cruz, tax reform in Burlington, to mention a few.

The campaigns have been run to win as well as to educate the voters, not just to spread propaganda. Although they employed the best affordable contemporary campaign tactics in their media efforts (and there are a number of leftists now with expertise in advertising and running campaigns), door-to-door work by candidates and their grassroots army—or platoons—were the key.

The issues and the direct appeal to those who had been left out of local politics—blue-collar workers, tenants, students, old people, the poor—mobilized new blocs of voters. The same principle has been applied in victories by black left candidates, such as in Chicago, even if they were not running as socialists. But white leftists have so far generally failed to mobilize black or Hispanic voters in large numbers (and in these three cases did not have large numbers to mobilize). In part this has

been because the issues for their primary base—such as environmentalism or control of economic growth—did not address the main concerns of blacks: jobs and new housing. That is only one of many contradictions within the electoral base of support that each leftist mayor and council member has had to juggle.

In each case, however, the issues were slightly different. Political success requires careful adaptation to each distinctive community. In addition, the personal appeal of individual left candidates is also essential. Voters understandably favor someone with an established record and a demonstrated rapport with constituents—that is, someone they think they can trust, not just someone who has "the right line."

Keeping power requires what winning does and more. The left has succeeded against entrenched, insensitive conservatives, often in changing communities. But the shift from protest to governing is not easy. New enemies are formed, and the excitement of supporters often declines as they take victory for granted. In local politics, the reaction of small property owners or middle-class voters can be volatile—initially supportive or not hostile toward reform, later worried about threats to their property.

What has the left been able to do? Like the "gas and water socialists" before them, they have brought administrative reform and efficiency, but they have also humanized city governments—saving and expanding social services. At times that has been done, ironically, by using municipal power to mobilize and support private, non-profit community efforts as much as by expanding municipal government. They have hired imaginative, resourceful people to improve planning, economic development and administration of justice.

Crime and the tax revolt, both considered preserves of conservatives, have been made issues for the left by emphasizing progressive taxation and by taking control of crime seriously, even if the left ultimately believes that crime can only be reduced through full employment and greater equality.

Ironically, the left has also ridden to power on other "conservative" issues—conservation of the environment, neighborhood preservation, control of economic development. Although such issues often have working-class appeal (especially neighborhood preservation), the overriding issue in most American communities presently is not taming the influx of capital but stopping the flight of capital. Economic development issues, more than any other, bring out tensions within the left coalitions as well as conflicts with local business.

Ultimately, the central question of local left politics, beyond the essentials of administrative and budgetary reform, concerns property rights. Whatever the mayor of Burlington or Santa Cruz may think of nationalizing banks or steel companies, that is irrelevant and beyond the scope of local politics (although a leftist in office can advocate such ideas from a platform with influence and legitimacy).

Rent control represents a shift in property rights toward tenants. Even progressive taxation or development controls modify private property rights and assert a public interest. Such "creeping socialism"—a favorite epithet of the right, but not a bad description in most instances—has its limits. Businesses can fight back politically, often recruiting allies among workers and the middle class who have deep ideological beliefs in private property and dreams of their own little empires, even if they otherwise benefit from and sympathize with leftist programs. Businesses can also move or refuse to expand or come into a community to build moderate

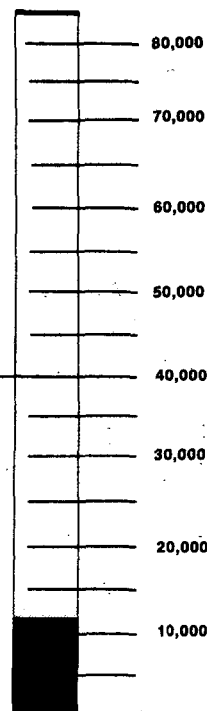
income housing, offices or factories.

In boom communities, the pressures for development may outweigh nearly anything the left can do to control business. Santa Monica, for example, has successfully demanded that developers take care of such public needs as parks, day care and low-income housing as a price of their opportunity to profit. But there is a general perspective on public power that can benefit the left even in more depressed communities. Much public activity contributes to the overall wealth of cities. If the schools are good, the streets maintained and parks and recreational facilities expanded, the economic climate as a whole is improved. But the public has a hard time capturing the results of its investments. Businesses and the most affluent property owners resist and flee taxes, for example. Most business owners have such narrow, parochial and short-term perspectives that they have no interest in managing the city to expand its wealth. Often without even realizing, they have a rule-and-ruin mentality.

The left brings to city government a belief in the legitimacy and necessity of the public role in expanding wealth—taken in a broad sense that includes public amenities and the quality of life as much as in strictly economic terms. It also believes in redistribution of that wealth to promote equality. How can that be done? Most municipal leftists, reflecting a new left heritage but also borrowing from older left traditions, look to cooperatives. Those have possibilities, especially in the transition from rental property to limited-equity cooperative housing or community land trusts, which mix the benefits of public ownership (removal of housing from a speculative market) with the benefits of private ownership (greater interest and responsibility on the part of residents). Although workers have bought abandoned businesses in some areas, municipal governments have not taken the lead in this area, despite proposals

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Too little, but not yet too late



In the third week of our \$80,000 drive we received \$4,760 and a pledge of \$50, bringing our total of contributions and pledges, so far, to only \$12,195.

The response to date seems to validate the advice given by many experts in the fundraising business that only an emergency appeal—a warning of disaster—can induce a substantial response.

We've avoided that, so far, because it is not yet warranted. But the paper cannot survive without raising \$280,000 from our readers this year. Although \$70,000 less than last year's deficit, that's still a lot of money. It requires a heftier response than we've gotten in the first three weeks.

(ISSN 0160-5992)

IN THESE TIMES

The Independent Socialist Newspaper

Published 42 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, second week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June, July and August by Mid-America Publishing Co., 1300 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60657, (312) 472-5700.

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IN THESE TIMES

By Diana Johnstone

WEST BERLIN

ALMOST 3,000 EUROPEANS and their friends from other continents spent most of the second week in May roaming from one simultaneously translated multilingual discussion to another in this city's giant aluminum spaceship-shaped International Conference Center searching for each other and for ways to stop the nuclear arms race. Participants at this Second European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Convention had to choose among 60 scheduled hearings, workshops and forums—either analyzing the problem or suggesting things to do about it—that overlapped with each other and among regional and professional “affinity” groups.

English women from Greenham Common preached “non-violent non-cooperation” while freeze architect Randall Forsberg urged the European peace movement to coordinate efforts with her American Freeze Campaign in lobbying the House of Representatives to hold back appropriations for Euromissiles. Oscar Lafontaine, the bold young Lord Mayor of Saarbrücken, asked labor unions to consider a general strike to stop missile deployment. Daniel Ellsberg uneasily promoted an open-ended “Fast for Life” scheduled to begin August 6 in San Francisco and Paris.

A surprisingly large contingent of 250 Spaniards denounced Socialist Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez's recent turnaround in favor of NATO missile deployment. Flowers were foisted upon crippled Hiroshima victims after they failed, yet again, to convey the reality of their indescribable experience. Officials from the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and from various German peace research institutes offered their expertise while activists complained loudly that the experts were talking too much. And lots and lots of Germans were in attendance, ranging from Social Democratic Party (SPD) Bundestag members to radical feminists.

Conspicuously *not* there were representatives of the many official and unofficial Eastern European peace groups invited by END. The intent of the Berlin Convention was to initiate a new East-West dialog to break through bloc confrontation and eventually get the two superpowers to withdraw all nuclear weapons from European territory “from Poland to Portugal.” END leaders' interest in the “unofficial” East European peace groups, their expressed concern for human rights in Eastern countries, helped the peace movement's independent image in the West.

But the door to dialog was slammed shut in the East. “The final result of our effort to promote ‘detente from below’ has been a cold war between the peace movements in the West and the official peace institutions and governments in Eastern Europe,” concluded Dutch leader Mient Jan Faber sadly.

The only East Europeans at the convention were a score of political exiles, among them Solidarity representative Jerzy Milewski and visiting Hungarian writer Gyorgy Konrad, the only one able to return home without trouble.

Western peace movement leaders are now groping for a more subtle approach to East-West dialog and detente. They conclude, in agreement with their friends among the “unofficials,” that they must reopen contacts with the official East European peace movements and work cautiously to promote broader communication.

The convention was not a policy-making body but a sort of tangled crossroads. The absence of binding resolutions to be voted on at the end saved the gathering from the intense factional battles that often consume party congresses. It also left much doubt as to what had been accomplished. There was, at least, clear consensus on the top priority of trying to stop

deployment later this year of Pershing 2 and Cruise nuclear missiles in the five NATO countries earmarked to receive them: Germany, Britain, Italy, Belgium and Holland. There was also across-the-board consensus that anti-missile actions should remain non-violent.

Lynn Jones from Greenham Common tried to set straight journalists who asked non-violence practitioners what they would do when they fail. She explained to them that the women camping around the Cruise missile base site don't imagine that they are going to block its construction by lying down on the road. Instead, *Greenham Common protesters hope to influence workers building the Cruise site.*



Peace groups ponder effect of possible setbacks

their action is a message to the men building it, who have the ability to withhold their labor. Jones called non-violence an endless creative process with limitless opportunities for building alliances and inventing new and more politically effective forms of action.

Wim Bartels of the Dutch Inter-Church Council (IKV) warned that a U.S. intelligence team sent to Europe recently to help NATO governments combat the peace movement may “inspire” leftist or rightist groups to engage in violence. Bartels said American newspaper articles predicting violence seemed to foreshadow a campaign of provocation and slander designed to discredit and isolate the peace movement from the majority support it has enjoyed so far.

Leaders of the large Dutch movement worry how the movement will weather defeats they see looming this year. The five deployment countries now all have conservative coalition governments more willing to brave their own public opinion than the Reagan administration's determination to put its new missiles in Europe. Mient Jan Faber said he expects the “absolute worst case” for the peace movement: by the end of the year, missiles will be deployed, and the U.S. and the Soviet Union will reach an agreement at the Geneva intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) talks that will “legitimize

the deployment” by attaching it to a new officially recognized East-West strategic balance. Faber fears that West Europeans will accept anything that seems to ensure “stability.”

Dutch IKV leaders who visited NATO headquarters in Brussels shortly before the convention said they were told by top NATO officers and Paul Nitze's second in command at Geneva, Ambassador Glitman, that there was no alternative to missile deployment in Europe. Thus Wim Bartels called on the movement to demand suspension of both missile base construction and the Geneva talks, which

and it will be too late by November, when the SPD is scheduled to finally hold its special congress to take a position on the NATO missile issue. She urged the European peace movement to act immediately to get prominent party leaders to hurry up and let Democrats in Congress know that the majority of Europeans do not want the missiles. She said Democrats must be told that their opposition to the missiles would not be construed as “anti-NATO” or “isolationist.”

Europeans' long habit of dependence on the U.S. works against such a clear-cut stand by political leaders in so short a

time. With no peace treaty ending World War II and allied occupation, Germans are not even sure they have any legal right to say no. In any case, the SPD would rather run behind the Democratic Party than in front of it. The Freeze Resolution passed by the House seems to offer such an opportunity. It was seized by Willy Brandt on the eve of the convention, when he suggested that the SPD and the Greens introduce a similar resolution in the Bundestag. This was taken up by the parliamentary affinity group in Berlin, which agreed to introduce freeze resolutions all over Europe.

Another obstacle is the chronic absence of any actual cooperation or understanding between European countries, especially the bigger ones. Dutch parliamentarian Klaas de Vries put it tartly when he said, the question is: “Can the British Labour Party and the German SPD understand each other or do they just regard each other as bloody fools?”

Yet the parliamentary affinity group took up Forsberg's suggestions, also planning an all-European parliamentarians' meeting October 10-14 in Strasbourg on the Euromissiles.

Tony Topham of British END reported to the conference's final plenary that increasing numbers of labor research groups are being set up to do arms industry conversion studies. “The process of arms conversion represents a part of a total radical alternative strategy for the transformation of our decadent economies,” Topham said. He also announced plans to hold a convention of shop stewards from Europe's arms-producing industries early next year. Meanwhile, a small secretariat has been set up representing unions in Italy, Germany, Sweden and Britain to plan an arms conversion network. Topham added that the unionists affinity group thought it was “high time we had a group called ‘Econ-

Continued on page 10

There was general agreement that the arms control process is merely a way to pursue and legitimize the arms race.

IN SHORT

Arming Chile's outlaws

With the help of an American arms export firm, Chile's military government illegally circumvented congressional legislation banning the sale of U.S. weapons there, according to a May 9 federal Grand Jury indictment. Peter Kornbluh reports that United Aviations Industries Inc. and two officials of the Chilean Naval Mission in Washington, D.C., are named in a 24-page indictment that lists more than a dozen occasions when munitions and spare parts for military equipment were illegally exported to Chile between February 1977 and July 1982. United Aviations owners Robert Poisson and Anthony Villa repeatedly mislabeled the equipment in an attempt to deceive customs officials, the indictment says. In one case, in July 1981, the firm was denied a State Department permit to export 30mm gun parts to Chile but sold them to the Chilean Naval mission anyway.

Because of the Pinochet regime's gross human rights violations, in June 1976 Congress cut off aid to Chile, including the sale of all military equipment. The legislation was repealed in December 1981 at the behest of the Reagan administration, but the ban remains in effect pending presidential certification that the Chilean government has improved its human rights record and has cooperated in bringing three of its intelligence officers to justice for the assassinations of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt. The United Aviations indictment, said Sen. Edward Kennedy, confirms Chile's "outlaw status" and should stall Reagan's attempts to proclaim its military rulers rehabilitated.

Dissident shareholder dumped

Demonstrating outside was one thing, but when a Sister of Mercy critical of Waste Management, Inc.'s landfill plans tried to enter a shareholder meeting, company officials drew the line. Although Sister Barbara Blake had a valid proxy statement, Jacob Weisberg reports—she planned to use the Sisters of Mercy's 7,000 votes to back an environmentalist for the company's board of directors—she was barred entrance to the meeting on the grounds that she carried insufficient identification: a driver's license apparently didn't suffice, although it was more than other shareholders had to produce. A Waste Management vice president later acknowledged that Blake's exclusion had been a mistake, but it served to squelch formal debate of the issue that brought Blake and 200 other demonstrators to the meeting—Waste Management's plans to site a landfill in the largely Hispanic community of South Deering, Ill., also known as Irondale. Led by Irondalers Against the Chemical Threat (I-Act), demonstrators leafleted outside the meeting to inform shareholders about the financial damage Waste Management can expect thanks to lawsuits alleging negligence in its waste monitoring. Chairman Dean Buntrock seemed affronted by the I-Act demonstrators: "It is beyond belief that anyone could think we would endanger this record of accomplishment." Given Waste Management's involvement in the Environmental Protection Agency's toxic waste scandals, that record of accomplishment is probably just what I-Act is worried about.

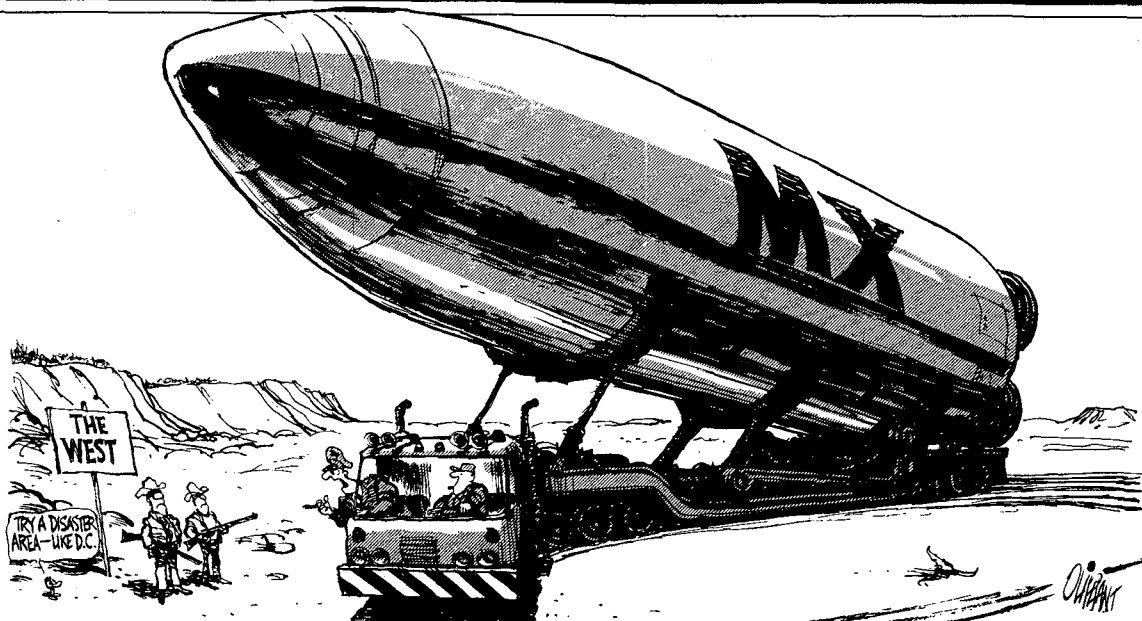
Mr. Chips and his critics

Leaders of the country's growing microelectronics industry met their critics at a mid-May conference in Santa Cruz, Calif., not far from Silicon Valley, and the needs of high-tech corporations ran up against those of their workers and customers. Funded primarily by the National Science Foundation and the University of California-Santa Cruz, with backing of major trade associations, the four-day conference on "Microelectronics in Transition" brought together an unprecedented range of experts from industry and academia, Lenny Siegel reports. In the first session, Intel Corporation's Robert Noyce—the industry's Mr. Chips—faced Harley Shaiken of MIT. While Noyce labelled Japanese competition a more serious problem than the displacement of American workers by microelectronics, Shaiken decried "the extraordinary contradiction between the potential of microelectronics technology and its reality" in the American workplace and urged that those affected by new technologies be given a say in their development and use. Warren Davis of the Semiconductor Industry Association got stuck explaining how the growing number of American semiconductor firms with a majority of employees outside the U.S. or with foreign owners can claim to represent the "national interest." But, Siegel said, the lack of local press coverage muffled the weekend's impact on the Silicon Valley.

Bridging peace and justice

A national conference on "Jobs, Peace and Freedom" June 3-4 will bring together the peace movement, trade unionists and civil rights groups at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn. Sponsored by Fisk's Race Relations Institute, the conference was planned as a "bridge between political organizers and theorists interested in economic justice and political rights with those organizations committed to arms reduction," says institute director Manning Marable. A vice chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, Marable also hopes the conference builds support for the Twentieth Anniversary March on Washington August 27, planned to commemorate the historic 1963 civil rights march as well as protest 1983 injustice.

—Joan Walsh



Western Solidarity rustles up MX protest

CHICAGO—The public opposition that helped scuttle the race-track and densepack MX basing plans can also stop the Reagan administration from placing the missiles in existing silos in Wyoming and Nebraska. At least that's the claim of Western Solidarity, a coalition of anti-MX Westerners that sent two members on a quick U.S. tour last week to rustle up national support for their crusade against the newest incarnation of the MX.

Established in December 1982, Western Solidarity built on a loose coalition of groups that sprang up to oppose the race-track plan that would have distributed the MX missiles in shelters across Utah and Nevada, a basing mode Reagan rejected in October 1981. Ranchers John McNamer of Montana and Mae Kirkbride of Wyoming said at a Chicago press conference that no matter where the missiles are placed, Westerners will oppose them. "It's a waste of money and resources, and it will take away our way of life," McNamer said. "It's a misconception that western people want the MX."

McNamer should know. The Vietnam veteran and rancher

lead Montana's anti-MX petition drive, which culminated in Initiative 91, last November's successful anti-MX nuclear freeze referendum. Before MX opponents began organizing, McNamer said, the state's politicians were either neutral or favored siting the missile there. But in the last election, eight of nine congressional candidates opposed MX deployment in Montana.

Wyoming's anti-MX movement is a little greener. Although Kirkbride says state residents oppose the president's plan to place the missiles in Minuteman III silos near Warren Air Force Base just outside Cheyenne, many of Wyoming's elected officials have embraced the MX, insisting it's a boon to the state economy.

But the Wyoming Democratic Party, along with the state's largest newspaper, have come out against the plan, and Gov. Ed Herschler has been embarrassed by published revelations that he met with Air Force officials and encouraged plans to site the MX in his state. Herschler, who had previously denied he "invited" the MX to Wyoming, is also under attack for his decision to let the Defense Department out of an agreement to submit the mis-

sile system to Wyoming's industrial siting review.

Western Solidarity's strategy has been to appeal to Westerners' self-interest, as well as educate them about the dangers of the arms race. "It starts out on an environmental level—we don't want this in our backyard—but people quickly become educated about the wider implications," McNamer said. He calls the MX a first-strike weapon, not a deterrent, that will only further destabilize relations with the Soviet Union. As one of the "Ranchers for Peace," McNamer visited the Soviet Union in December and came away convinced "people in both countries want peace—it's just their governments that are getting in the way."

As President Reagan intensifies his campaign to melt congressional MX opposition, Western Solidarity has stepped up its own crusade. Last week's tour took McNamer and Kirkbride to Chicago, New York, Miami, Philadelphia and Raleigh, N.C. A May 29 "No MX" rally in Cheyenne is expected to draw thousands. But if the president gets congressional backing and if MX opponents lose their battle for a full environmental review of the project, the first missiles could be deployed in Wyoming next January. At that point, McNamer says, "they're going to be coming over the top of this cowboy to put them in the ground."

—Joan Walsh



FBI's state bar informant

SAN FRANCISCO—Pre-trial discovery in the National Lawyers Guild's (NLG) multi-million dollar lawsuit against the FBI revealed that the bureau regularly obtained the NLG's California membership list from an informant within the State Bar of California.

The *San Francisco Bay Guardian* reported last week that a bar official gave FBI agents the Guild's membership lists every year, from as early as the mid-'50s through the mid-'70s. Until a few years ago, the state bar required the rosters from all of its member groups in exchange for the right to have voting delegates at its annual conference.

The NLG learned of the practice last November, when bar officials phoned Guild attorney Benjamin Dreyfus and said the FBI had told them it planned to

release information about its bar informant to the Guild in pre-trial discovery. Dreyfus said the officials, who expressed shock at the disclosures, later told him the practice had begun with one of the bar's chief investigators, George Heckert, and continued with a successor. Heckert is deceased and neither the state bar nor the FBI would comment on Dreyfus' report.

The NLG lawsuit that disclosed the FBI's bar connections, filed in 1977, alleges that the FBI and U.S. government illegally harassed and disrupted the leftist NLG from 1940 through the mid-'70s. The NLG has received 400,000 pages of its FBI file that it says documents 109 acts of illegal surveillance and other "black bag jobs." The FBI has confirmed at least 13 Guild members were undercover FBI agents and 102 more were paid informants. Another three million pages of FBI documents on the NLG remain to be released, but the FBI is challenging the disclosure.

Original articles, news clips, memos, press releases, reports, anecdotes—send them all to "In Short," c/o *In These Times*, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657. Please include your address and phone number.

Bieber: UAW has given up "all we're going to give"

DALLAS—In a generally quiet convention, newly elected United Auto Workers (UAW) President Owen Bieber pledged to continue leading the union in the same direction as his more colorful predecessor Doug Fraser. The return of profitability to the auto industry means the end of UAW concessions, Bieber said—auto workers had "given all we're going to give."

But outgoing President Fraser made it plain that the union would continue to pursue "democracy in the workplace" through Quality of Work Life programs, which some UAW members interpret as meaning work-rule concessions on the local level.

The convention was not slated to discuss bargaining issues, which are to be taken up at a special convention in March 1984. Thus discontent with union concessions made itself felt not in floor debate, but indirectly on other issues.

According to sources in the international union, the leadership was most worried about the issue of "referendum vote" (a one member/one vote method of electing officers that proponents argue would allow the rank and file a greater voice in selecting union leaders).

Currently the International Executive Board (IEB) chooses a candidate from among its own ranks and this choice is then ratified by the convention. Although theoretically an opposition candidate could run more than a token campaign under the convention system, it hasn't happened since Walter Reuther won the presidency from R.J. Thomas in 1946.

It is probably no coincidence that many of those who spoke in favor of the referendum had op-

posed the contract concessions last year. But despite a lively caucus meeting the night before the vote, which saw many new faces as well as long-time dissenters, the referendum was defeated on the floor, as it had been at two previous conventions.

The pro-referendum forces won one victory, though, defeating an IEB proposal that would have given the board power to redistrict the union geographically between conventions.

The only other issue of note to come before the convention was the question of recall rights for workers laid off from GM's closed assembly plant in Fremont, Calif. The local there is insisting that workers should be recalled in order of seniority when the plant reopens next year as a GM-Toyota joint venture and tried to introduce a resolution to that effect. Fremont workers fear that if seniority is ignored, the company will weed out older workers, those with injuries and union activists. A meeting of delegates from GM assembly locals last month voted strong support for the local's position, but at the convention, the local learned that its resolution was not scheduled for discussion. Bieber pledged that the GM-Toyota workers would come from "among those that have recall rights" at Fremont, but would not commit the UAW to fighting for seniority.

In an effort to hold Bieber to his "no more concessions" pledge in national bargaining next year, about 50 delegates met to form an organization called RAM—Restore and More. It includes some of those who were active in opposing concessions last year as well as some newly recruited local officials.

—Jane Slaughter

Unionists in RAM—Restore and More—will help UAW President Owen Bieber keep his "no more concessions" pledge.



Robert Gumpert

Briefing: Notes on labor democracy

Peter Fisher thinks General Dynamics is out to get him. Fisher, 29, has worked for the corporation's 19,000-employee Electric Boat division in Groton, Conn., since 1977. His experience on the job turned him into a committed unionist and—horror of horrors in a shipyard thriving on Trident submarine production—an opponent of the arms race.

After he and some other workers publicly supported defense conversion planning at a 1979 disarmament conference, company security agents tried to get the Defense Investigative Service to revoke Fisher's security clearance on the grounds that he was a member of the American Friends Service Committee, a "Communist" organization. Two years later Fisher was cleared on appeal.

A member of a small reform caucus in the 4,000-member Boilermakers union, the main union in the yard, Fisher eventually linked up with the nuclear freeze campaign and recently organized a conference on economic conversion and labor.

Earlier this year he came under the close scrutiny—some would say harassment—of a foreman who charged him with various minor rule infractions. In March the foreman said he was eating a forbidden apple on the job, was disrespectful to management and was out of his assigned work area. Fisher said he was eating a red Fireball, a candy popular in the yards. He was suspended, then fired.

The Boilermakers filed a grievance. But the Metal Trades Council, which coordinates union activity at Electric Boat, refused to take the case to arbitration. Now Fisher's attorney is pursuing his case before the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and in federal court, charging the company with a conspiracy to retaliate against Fisher and deny him his First Amendment rights as well as breach of contract. The complaint also accuses the union of failing to

represent Fisher fairly.

Fisher complains that the union has testimony from co-workers supporting him that it has not released. But he recently received public support from a local newspaper editorial and from Lou Kiefer, the Machinist district organizer. Kiefer said the Metal Trades Council decision was "criminal" and "smacks of collusion" with management.

American Motors Corporation (AMC) management at Kenosha, Wisc., appears to have colluded with four foremen, a former foreman and the son of a superintendent to finance the \$4.2 million lawsuit that the six men are bringing against three local union members. They claimed damages from articles in *Fighting Times*, an independent monthly put out by UAW activists Jon Melrod, John Drew and Tod Ohnstad, all of whom are also chief stewards.

In late April, the 30th Region of the NLRB charged AMC with engaging in an unfair labor practice. After a union official testified that managers had told him five different times that the company was financing the suit, the NLRB asked that AMC be directed to have its agents—the foremen—call off their lawsuit, to withdraw its support of the suit, to reimburse defendants for legal expenses, to stop interrogating employees about the case and to cease harassing Melrod.

Meanwhile, French union officials—who also sit on the board of directors of Renault, now the majority owner of AMC—are asking the socialist government why managers of its nationalized firm are harassing union members.

Maintaining democracy in what has always been a democratic union, the 250,000-member American Postal Workers Union, will be the main campaign theme of West Virginia state union president David E. Daniel, 31, who announced he will challenge

Postal workers elect union leaders by mail.

president Moe Biller, a former New York local official elected president three years ago.

Daniel criticizes Biller for trying to cut the number of elected officials of the union from 183 to less than 25. Biller also wanted to eliminate the right of state presidents to vote on behalf of small locals who cannot send delegates. Both moves were defeated at last year's convention.

In addition to the top national offices, such as the president, who will be elected by (what else?) mail ballots in September, business agents and special craft representatives are also elected, although not necessarily by the entire national membership.

Daniel criticizes Biller's negotiation of the 1981 contract. He says he would stress a more professional approach to bargaining but not hesitate to call a strike as a last resort. (Strikes by postal workers are not legal, and although there have been important partial strikes since 1970, no national strike has ever been called.)

The new *United Mine Workers Journal* is one testament to what greater democracy can mean in a union. The current issue has articles on unemployed organizing, including a variety of tough, intelligent testimonials from miners on the causes of unemployment and sharp criticism of U.S. businesses' overseas investment, nuclear power, corporate mergers and bloated managerial staffs. The union's political program calls for democratically controlled public investment and planning.

There are exposes of Reagan administration cutbacks in mine safety enforcement and guides to rights on the job. Environmentalists, however, might be upset that the UMW, fearing job loss, favors a weak approach to control of acid rain.

Equally significant, the well-designed paper—beginning to show the signs of life that marked the early Miners for Democracy editions of the *Journal*—has only one picture of new president Rich Trumka and includes one letter critical of him.

—David Moberg

IN THE NATION

MANVILLE

Plan to dodge lawsuits hit

By Paul Glickman

OAKLAND

MANVILLE CORPORATION'S strategy of declaring bankruptcy to avoid paying damages to thousands of its former asbestos workers has hit rough waters. Involved in difficult negotiations on its reorganization, Manville has been stunned by a legal ruling that could undermine its entire legal game plan.

In another bankruptcy case in April, federal judge William Hart rejected the argument of asbestos-maker UNR Industries, Inc., that Chapter 11 of the bankruptcy law protects a company from claims that may be filed in the future. "Congress," wrote Hart, "has not given the judiciary authority to adjudicate the claims of future unknown claimants." UNR says it will appeal all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

This ruling has profound implications for Manville, which filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 last August. At the time it filed, Manville reported a net worth of \$1 billion, but said it would go broke by the year 2000 because of the thousands of lawsuits that would be filed by former asbestos workers now suffering from asbestosis, lung cancer and other diseases. All claims against Manville have been frozen since it filed under Chapter 11.

Despite the UNR decision, Manville Vice-President G. Earl Parker maintains that "we're still very much of the opinion that claims, whether asserted or not, can be dealt with in Chapter 11." But Robert Rosenberg, lawyer for 17,000 people with claims against Manville, calls the UNR ruling "wonderful," saying it "completely vindicates our position" that bankruptcy cannot be used to escape anticipated legal costs.

"This is a major defeat for the asbestos companies," agrees San Francisco asbestos attorney Steve Kazan. "If Hart's ruling is upheld, then even if Manville and the others get out from under current claims, they could still be hit by thousands of suits filed in the coming years."

Manville's Parker sees a silver lining in the UNR ruling. "The good news," he says, "is that the judge called for congressional action." Manville is lobbying for legislation to create a government/industry fund to compensate former asbestos workers.

Colorado Senator Gary Hart has introduced a bill that would establish such a fund, but the legislation given the best chance of passage is H.R. 5735, introduced last year by California Representative George Miller. Miller's bill calls for a fund paid for solely by industry.

Under Chapter 11, Manville is required to submit a reorganization plan for approval by a bankruptcy court. On May 23 Manville received its fourth extension—this one for 30 days—of the deadline to submit a plan. But the company did reveal part of its formula earlier this month. Manville lawyers told a bankruptcy judge on May 12 that the firm wants to create a spinoff of its non-asbestos operations. These divisions, which accounted for about three-fourths of Manville's \$1.8 billion in revenues last year, would be exempt from asbestos liability. The newly created company would contribute to a fund set up to pay off asbestos claimants.

Banks, insurance companies and suppliers owed money by Manville, as well as lawyers for asbestos claimants and asbes-

tos companies that are Manville's co-defendants are involved in the negotiations on the reorganization plan. Most parties participating in the talks agree that the entire asbestos industry must contribute to any compensation fund. But disagreements have arisen over how big the fund should be, who should contribute to it and how much they should contribute.

Manville ran into more trouble in April when lawyers for asbestos litigants leveled conflict of interest charges against a Manville attorney. When a firm declares bankruptcy, a judge must approve all of

the company's lawyers during the reorganization process. Manville asked bankruptcy judge Burton Lifland to confirm Richard Velde as one of its attorneys, but opposition lawyers pointed out that while he's been representing Manville in its bankruptcy case, Velde has been special counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on courts. This subcommittee is responsible for pending legislation to reform the bankruptcy system.

Velde retired in January as the subcommittee's chief counsel, and says he was retained as special counsel for a sal-

ary of \$1 a year, "to work on matters which have nothing to do with bankruptcy." But Judge Lifland held up Velde's confirmation, saying, "Sufficient questions have been raised to require further amplification with respect to the retention of this individual at this time."

To compound Manville's legal and legislative woes, the private sector is beginning to question the legitimacy of the bankruptcy move. In a May 9 commentary in *Business Week*, William Glaberson argues that Manville and other solvent companies filing under Chapter 11 are trying to stretch the definition of bankruptcy beyond reasonable limits.

Glaberson writes, "There is a murmur of indignation that grows louder every time a company pushes the limits of Chapter 11 a bit further.... There is something wrong about using bankruptcy as a management strategy." He warns that abuses of Chapter 11 will lead to changes in the law that will make rehabilitation of truly needy companies much more difficult.

Paul Glickman is a staff writer for Rip'n' Read News Service.



Former Yale student John Wilhelm led the narrowly successful union drive.

LABOR

Yale U. workers vote for a union

By Paul Bass

NEW HAVEN, CT

UNION ORGANIZERS HERE won their biggest victory in 15 years when Yale University's 2,700 pink-collar workers voted to unionize on May 18.

The new union, Local 34 of the Federation of University Employees—which is affiliated with the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union—will be the largest in the New Haven area. The victory is expected to open doors for organizing clerical workers in the private sector in the area and may also help propel similar drives at other colleges, including Harvard and Dartmouth.

The Yale victory was a long time coming, however. It happened only after 15 years of organizing by six groups that pitted a loyal though underpaid female workforce against one of the area's most powerful institutions. When the 2,495 ballots were tallied, the union had squeaked by with 39 votes.

Observers say the contest was a textbook battle that offers lessons for other clerical drives.

The first drive among Yale clerical and technical workers (C&Ts) began in 1967. Two unsuccessful elections, several organizing groups and 10 years later, the United Auto Workers (UAW) opened an office and initiated the most serious drive to date.

The UAW never got enough support to call for an election. Shifts in leadership plagued the drive, but there were

deeper problems. About 80 percent of the Yale clerical workforce is female, and C&Ts had always been difficult to organize. Many felt loyalty to their employers and apparently subscribed to the theory that the prestige of working for an Ivy League university outweighed decent pay and benefits.

By the time Local 34 began its drive in 1980, the climate was different. Yale officials had promised during the past two elections to raise salaries and benefits in the long run, but it didn't.

Whenever there's a union push, everyone gets benevolent," said Pearl Moore, a Yale clerical worker for the past 11 years. "Then it quiets down." Moore voted against the union twice before, but this time she joined the organizing committee of Local 34.

According to David Montgomery, a Yale labor history professor, the worsening economy and the mechanization of work helped the Local 34 drive, as did a growing consciousness among women that they have a right to equal pay. "The feminist movement in this country has had a profound impact on wiping out the notion that 'my work doesn't count,'" he said.

Yale officials told the C&Ts that voting in a union could hurt their chances of improved salaries and benefits since it would bring in a "third party," jeopardizing the "collegial spirit."

But this time C&Ts couldn't ignore the success of Yale's service and maintenance employees union, which, after four bitter strikes in the '70s, recently earned a respectable contract. Many custodians now earn \$6.52 an hour or more after one year on the job. By contrast, some of the highest-paid C&Ts—like computer operators—make slightly more than \$5 an hour. Typists start at \$9,600 a year and, no matter how long they've worked at Yale, under the current scale they never earn more than \$13,300.

Another major difference in the Local 34 drive was the union itself. It ran a shrewd campaign, led by local organizer and former Yale John Wilhelm. Wilhelm was recently named vice-president of the international union and helped revive the local in Boston. He used a formula there that also proved successful at Yale: involve hundreds of union members themselves in planning the drive. There were 120 C&Ts on the steering committee for the Local 34 campaign, and 450 served on the organizing committee. Unlike past drives, they came from each of the many university departments.

"The clear difference now is the organization," said Karl Lechow, who worked on the first drive 15 years ago and helped coordinate the Local 34 drive. "Before, the understanding was that people were to vote for the union and then work out the democracy." This time, he said, it worked the other way around.

And this time Local 34 was prepared for each tactic of the union-busting firm

Continued on page 10

WASHINGTON, D.C.

By David Field

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SINCE MOST OF THIS CITY'S VOTERS are registered Democrats, they are generally sympathetic to such traditional liberal concerns as labor interests. So a mayor of this city is usually a friend of organized labor—not only to gain the votes of rank-and-file workers but also to capture the ballots of those close to unionists.

But Mayor Marion Barry, twice elected with the enthusiastic support of public sector unions, is now facing a rebellion launched by a private sector union—a campaign to place an initiative on the ballot that would overturn one of his controversial labor policies involving unemployment compensation benefits that went into effect in early March.

Barry won a tight three-way Democratic primary race in 1978 largely because of the strength labor gave to his coalition of politically disenfranchised inner-city poor, white liberals and the city's growing number of gays. The volunteers lent to his grassroots campaign by public employee unions was at least as important as their votes. The failure of private sector unions to rally behind him concerned Barry less than the lack of support from business interests.

But when Barry was re-elected in 1982—again with the support of organized labor and with private sector unions still holding out—he had more than a coalition behind him. This time Barry had the support of much of the city's development and investment interests. He had

learned that he'd have to deal with office developers and landlords to create the political machine he wanted.

Since his re-election, Barry has shown that he can govern without catering to labor. And labor has shown that it's not able to present a unified front that might force him to heed its wishes.

The mayor recently signed legislation that drastically reduces the benefits for workers injured on the job, as well as measures cutting the amount, length and qualifications for unemployment compensation. While Barry undertook the legislative initiatives to prove that he can keep a promise—a promise he made to development interests time and again during his first term, a promise to make D.C. "more receptive to business"—some of the city's rank and file have begun to wonder what has happened to the promises he made to them.

In his defense, Barry can point out that the change in workmen's compensation programs carried out under his administration was in the works before he took office. For years, if workers were injured on the job in D.C. they received the same generous payments as longshoremen around the country. That was part of the District's heritage as a colony—a federal law written by a Congress that owed favors to big labor and found the longshoremen's bill a convenient place to take on a statute affecting the District, over whose labor laws it had jurisdiction. The city had attempted to change the statute, only to be told by the courts that it could not rewrite federal law. In 1981, a higher court decided otherwise in a decision that was ironically

Labor program of mayor challenged by some unionists

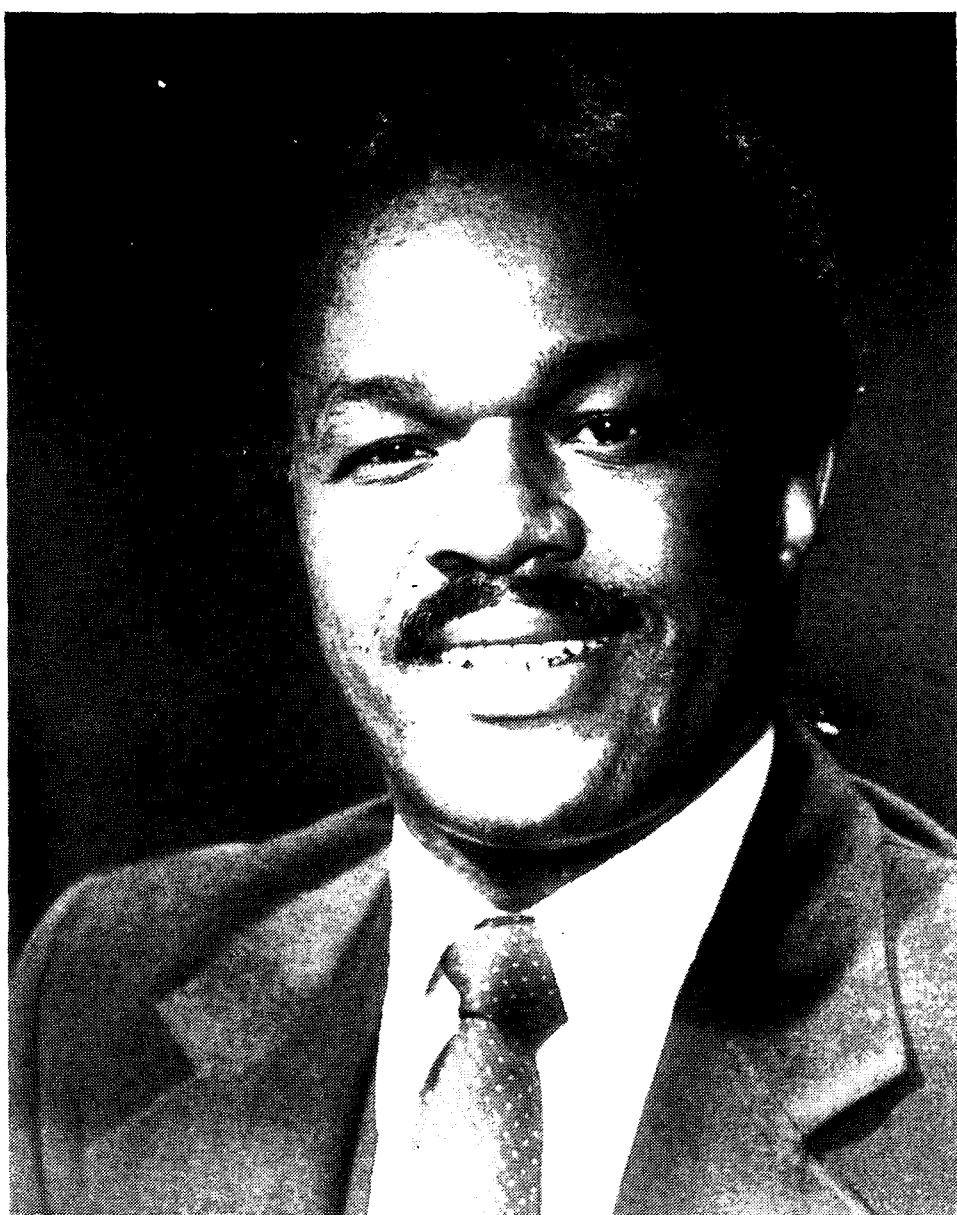
hailed as a victory for the District's home rule.

Labor could have lived with that. The workmen's compensation rates were high enough and the unions were allowed to exercise some control over the re-writing of the law. In this case, Barry came out ahead.

The unemployment compensation revisions, however, presented a greater challenge to the mayor's image as a friend of labor. Employers complained that the taxes they paid into the unemployment trust fund imposed too great a financial burden. Barry promised to seek businesses that would provide the jobs his administration couldn't create, and the Council had heard a lot during the 1982 campaign about the high cost of doing business in a city that was still losing jobs to the suburbs.

Because only a complete reorganization of the city's government could remove the major obstacle to business the Council opted for the immediate gratification of cutting benefits. The \$60 million deficit in the trust fund provided further impetus to act. The District was eager to get into the bond market, and its bank books were not in the black.

Although the new unemployment scheme didn't reduce the maximum weekly benefit, as changes in other states' laws had, it did cut from 34 to 26 weeks the time over which the unemployed could draw the princely sum of \$206 (tops). It also raised the amount a worker must make in a quarter in order to qualify for benefits and, more controversial, it excluded from eligibility those fired for "misconduct." This last feature scared many: if bosses wanted to get rid of employees they only had to claim that workers were guilty of misconduct. Although the charge could be contested, the appeal



Washington mayor Marion Barry.

Richardson decided to act. In early spring, shortly after the new unemployment law went into effect, Richardson announced that his union's council, the 42,000-member Food and Allied Trades Council, would begin circulating petitions to place an overturn of the law on the ballot.

Since the referendum process Richardson began is hardly an easy step, the threat to petition for an initiative must be seen as the last resort of a lost or losing cause. And it can do as much harm as good. After supporters of a tuition tax credit were soundly defeated in 1981, the issue lost momentum.

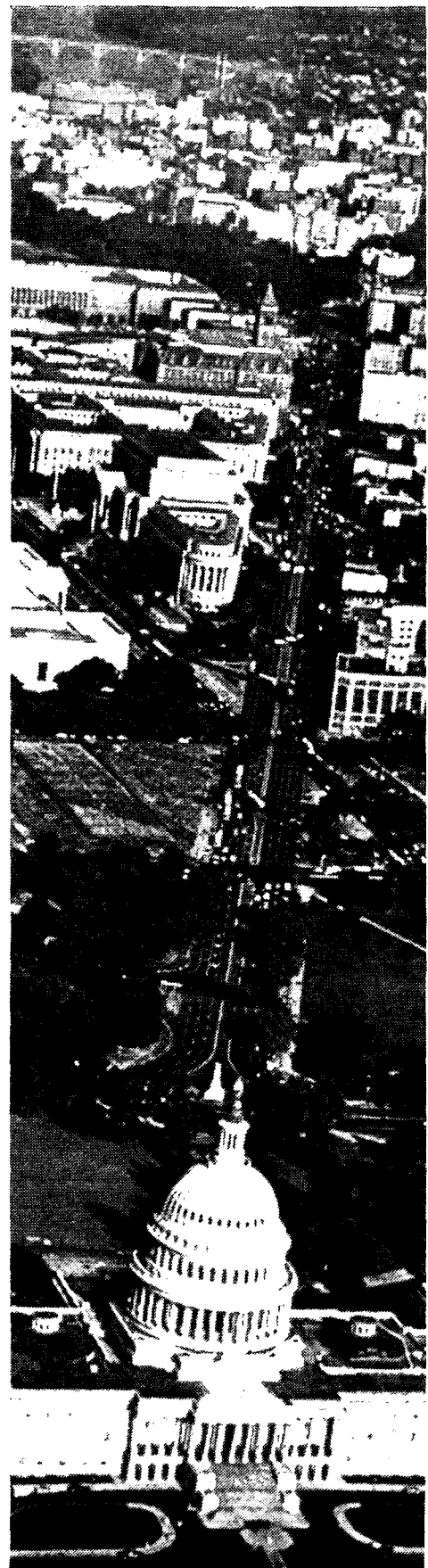
Most observers attribute Richardson's launching of the initiative drive to his need to reassert control over his union—after backing two mayoral losers in a row he may be viewed as replaceable. So Richardson has taken on the task of launching the initiative by himself. The executive board of the Metropolitan Washington AFL-CIO, the city's labor umbrella group, has voted not to support Rich-

Barry's union supporters went along with unemployment law changes.

ardson's efforts, thus taking their 90,000 members away from the potential pool of signers and workers. And the Council's President Joselyn (Josh) Williams carries enough weight with the rank and file to keep defections at a minimum.

Richardson and the private sector employees are again on the outside, and the seemingly inevitable defeat of the petition drive will guarantee that they stay outside both labor power and political power. For public employees, the road to power has been a long one, and now that they are inside the power structure, they've learned one thing from their forced acceptance of lowered benefits and protection: access to power has its price.

David Field writes for City Paper, where a version of this story first appeared.



Photographer unknown

IN THE WORLD



By Allen Isaacman

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

THE CONSENSUS AMONG FOREIGN delegates and journalists who traveled to Mozambique in late April to attend the FRELIMO Party's Fourth Congress was that it represented a critical juncture in the country's transition to democratic socialism. Just as the three previous congresses were marked by ideological debate that altered the course of the young nation, this congress would also grapple with several critical issues. And since the congress was occurring during a period of escalating war, drought and economic difficulties, there was a sense of drama.

The war that has spread to at least six of Mozambique's 10 provinces is being waged against the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), a South African-backed terrorist organization. (See *In These Times*, Nov. 24, 1982). Although high Mozambican military officials, as well as Western diplomats, indicate that the recent MNR offensive has suffered several setbacks, the MNR continues to attack strategic economic sites and disrupt daily life in rural areas.

Recent speculation in the Western

press that South Africa has reduced its support for the MNR in return for Mozambique's agreement to place limitations on the African National Congress' activities appears unfounded. According to Sebastiao Mobate, Mozambican chief of staff, "There is no indication Pretoria's military involvement has diminished during the first half of this year." Last week's South African attack on Maputo—in which at least four people were killed and 24 were wounded—and threats of future attacks demonstrate both continuing South African aggression toward Mozambique and that country's vulnerability.

The drought in east Africa has hit Mozambique especially hard. More than four million Mozambicans (one-third of the population) have been affected, and the government has had to use much of its hard currency reserves to purchase rice and other grains.

The war and the drought have both contributed to the nation's economic problems. Production targets set for key sectors of the economy—including those in which the state had intervened after the Third Party Congress in 1977—have not been met. And the modest growth in the economy between 1977 and 1981 dried up last year. Agricultural production, up by 8.8 percent between 1977 and

1981, declined by 2.4 percent in 1982, while industrial output was 2.2 percent less than in 1977.

Despite these serious problems, at first glance the positions reached at the Fourth Party Congress did not seem especially significant to foreign observers. But a careful reading of the Central Committee report and private conversations with Senior FRELIMO members suggest that this Congress adopted positions whose emphasis was substantially different from those of the previous one.

Reversing decentralization.

The Third Party Congress had agreed to establish state control over strategic sectors of the economy and introduce principles of economic planning. Although a number of paralyzed sectors were nationalized and resuscitated and the overall economy experienced some growth, the accompanying drift to centralization had stifled local initiative and grassroots participation. So the main concern of the Fourth Party Congress was to reverse these tendencies by decentralizing power. This emphasis on local initiative represents a return to FRELIMO policies that were pursued during both the revolution and the first two years of independence. It is reflected not only in new economic and political directives, but also in the composition of the new Central Committee and the freewheeling discussions preceding the Fourth Congress.

Starting in September 1982, FRELIMO launched a nationwide study and discussion of the leadership's "eight theses" on critical domestic and international issues the nation faced by sending Central Committee members on countrywide tours. Meetings held at villages and in work places provided an opportunity for party leaders to identify local problems, to encourage a spirit of criticism and to revise obsolete local party structures. Said one senior Central Committee member, "We were deluged with complaints of bureaucratic indifference, of corruption, of the absence of state support for the family sector and communal villages and, above all else, of the lack of basic consumer goods."

The official summary of these meetings presented at the Congress confirmed the depth of the problem. FRELIMO officials candidly admitted that the quality of life of many Mozambicans had been adversely affected "by our own shortcomings and mistakes." To the extent that the local discussions permitted workers and peasants to pressure the party leadership for change, they demonstrated the vitality of the democratic component of democratic-centralism.

In January FRELIMO party members at the local, regional and provincial level began electing delegates to the Congress, its final composition reflecting FRELIMO's emphasis on popular participation. Of the 667 delegates, more than 72 percent were peasants (195), workers (173) and soldiers (85). One hundred and five women were elected, more than double the number attending the Third Congress. In fact, only 12 percent of the delegates had participated in the previous congress, and many of the newcomers came prepared to question government policies.

The Central Committee report that President Machel presented in more than 13 hours focused on the economy. It ve-

The government arms the popular militia fighting against the MNR.

President Machel addresses the Central Committee.

hemently criticized the lack of state support for peasants. Although the previous congress had favored organizing massive Eastern European-style state farms as the most effective way to end Mozambique's food shortages and to generate cash crop exports, Machel articulated new priorities this time.

He said, "Small-scale projects are a method of making full use of locally available resources, and of taking full advantage of existing productive capacities. Their achievement develops the people's confidence in their own abilities, combats passivity and a spirit of dependence, frees the imagination and creative initiative."

He added that in the fight against hunger, "the family sector in the countryside warrants immediate priority." Leading members of the Central Committee admitted privately that the expensive state farms had not produced the anticipated output and had created serious organizational problems. And by locating all the country's resources in this sector and promising peasants tractors and other machinery that was impossible to deliver, the government "repressed local initiatives because the peasants were reluctant to clear their fields with hoes, waiting for the day when the tractors would come."

On May 22 at a rally of 50,000 in Maputo, Machel said that the government development bank would aid the family sector and other small private projects designed to increase agricultural production. "We have erroneously developed a hostile attitude to private enterprise that must be changed," he told the rally.

Together with its call for greater state support at the grassroots, the report stressed the need to reduce the centralization of authority and revitalize local political institutions. This began during the

Recent changes in party policy emphasize local initiative and reduce the centralization of authority.

months preceding the Congress, when corrupt and inefficient party members were removed, serious debate was initiated and concrete programs of work were defined in most of the 4,200 party cells that had not been functioning properly. The Central Committee report also stressed the important political role of the popular tribunals and the 1,322 democratically elected local assemblies as the concrete expression of "people's power"—a familiar theme since the Third Party Congress.

It was particularly critical of the limited impact of the assemblies to date, saying, "We elected to the assemblies at various levels 43,606 deputies. Their impact on society, however, does not match up to their numbers, ability and influence. Some assemblies meet merely to fulfill the legal requirements and their debates and decisions are not followed up or con-

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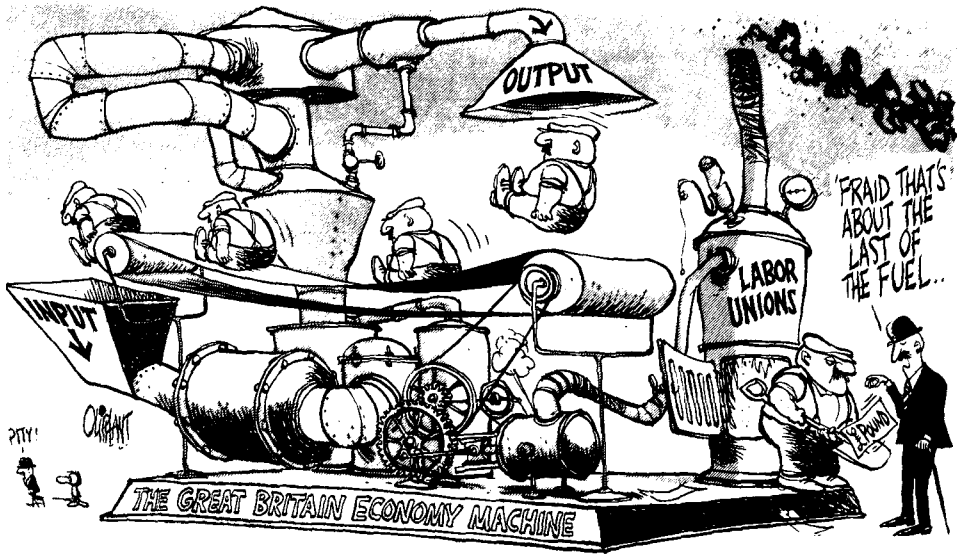
AFRICA

Fourth Congress reverses ideology



BRITAIN

Skilled workers are leaving Labour



By Tariq Ali

LONDON

THREE WEEKS AGO BRITISH Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher inaugurated her election campaign with an ultra-simplistic rant in Scotland. It was almost as if the Conservative Central Office had decided to observe the 50th anniversary of Adolf Hitler's rise to power by reverting to the old technique of the "big lie." It is, after all, a simple operation: invent a falsehood, embellish it shamelessly and then repeat it *ad nauseum* in the media.

Thatcher told her Scottish audience (Scotland, incidentally, is a rock-solid Labour stronghold) the general election was a straightforward choice between "freedom and Marxist socialism." That analytical gem was appreciated by her carefully selected audience of baying Tory hounds. It was, of course, demagoguery of the lowest sort and will soon be forgotten because even if Labour loses, it would be absurd to maintain that 10 million workers voted for revolutionary socialism. If that had been the case, Brit-

economic individual against the constraints imposed by social interests organized through the state.

But the most important feature of that victory was the fact that two million trade unionists (many of them formerly members of the Labour Party) voted for the program. Since they believed it was an indictment of the policies of the preceding Wilson-Callaghan Labour government, it can hardly be argued that the Labour left was responsible for the defeat. Workers deserted Labour because they were deeply dissatisfied with its record in office. And their votes gave Thatcher the confidence that she could proceed along her chosen path uninhibited by the likelihood of large-scale industrial action even on a minimal political level. She was proved right.

Thatcher's 1979 success also gave the lie to the Labour right's conventional wisdom that the secret to success lay in permanent occupation of the "middle ground." No one could have tried harder to do that than Callaghan and Healey in 1979. By contrast, Thatcher's appeal was frankly radical, repudiating not merely Labour's policies but also those of her Tory predecessors. This differed sharply

polls. But Britain won and every Conservative reflex of British society was strengthened. Labour leaders, fearful of losing popularity, backed Thatcher. In reality, their failure to oppose Thatcher's strategy on the Falklands (Tony Benn was the only major Labour politician to do so) sealed their own fate. Thatcher was seen as a determined and tough leader, capable of dealing with any crisis.

Since the war, Labour has never been ahead of the Tories in opinion polls. The thought of a Tory landslide appears to even worry the moderate wing of the Conservative Party. British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym—who was reprimanded by Thatcher for suggesting negotiations with Argentina be reopened—recently made a bizarre appeal to the electorate. He stated publicly that a Conservative landslide would not be a healthy development for British politics. Once again, he was rapped on the knuckles by an irate Thatcher, but he repeated his views.

The two major issues in the campaign are unemployment and defense policy. With unemployment the Tories are defenseless, but Labour's problem lies in its lackluster campaign and in its inability to project any alternative beyond a souped-up Keynesianism. More important, Thatcher successfully split the unemployed from those who still have jobs. She has appealed to trade unionists by going above the head of their union leaders, and has scored notable successes in preventing industrial actions to save jobs.

There were fewer strikes this year and the last than at any other time since the acceleration of the 1974 recession. The Achilles heel of the Labour counter-offensive is its failure to win back the skilled workers it lost to the Tories in the last general election.

The reason for this is not only ideological but also material. The skilled workers in the curcial West Midlands area of England deserted Labour in 1979. They were angry because Labour had eroded differentials by redistributing wealth exclusively within the working class. As a result, the living standard of skilled workers deteriorated sharply under the last Labour government of James Callaghan. The unpalatable fact remains that real wages for this social layer have actually risen under Thatcher—a fact underpinning the dichotomy between the unemployed and the employed. This division is increasingly reflected in the North-South divide. The North (comprising Scotland and the north of England) is expected to vote Labour this time around, as it did in 1979. The South will vote Tory, unless there is a rapid shift in consciousness. A Tory victory could lead to great emphasis on regional autonomy or even movement toward "home rule."

What is both new and welcome in Labour's current election manifesto is a clear-cut commitment to get rid of all nuclear bases on British soil and refuse the Pentagon's offer to place Cruise missiles in Britain at the end of this year. It is this commitment to universal nuclear disarmament that makes Michael Foot unacceptable to the ruling establishment as a potential prime minister—thus Labour right's attempts to ditch him as leader a few months ago.

It is a special feature of this election (and a telling comment on British democracy) that Labour's official nuclear weapons policy is not supported by any daily newspaper. The *Daily Mirror*—a mass circulation popular paper that is backing Labour—refuses to unleash its campaign journalists to savage the Tories on nuclear weapons. And Foot's preferred choice for deputy leader of the Labour Party, Dennis Healey—as well as the ma-

jority of the Parliamentary Labour Party—does not support the line on nuclear weapons. This means that an issue that could win Labour a lot of votes if handled properly has instead tended to highlight internal differences within the Labour Party. Foot is regularly attacked by media pundits as being too old. Yet the same commentators accept Ronald Reagan as their leader in world politics without too many qualms.

Whatever the election results, there is bound to be a confrontation within Labour to map out the party's future. The present leaders have taken factionalism to such an extreme that Tony Benn, respected even by his enemies as an effective and skilled campaigner, has been kept out of this campaign. Ken Livingstone, leader of the Greater London Council, has been prevented by a series of sordid maneuvers by the Labour leadership from standing as a member of Parliament in a safe Labour seat. Benn, too, was the victim of chicanery in the reallocation of seats and has been forced to contest the election in a marginal constituency.

Generally, the Labour Party has been run by an alliance of the Parliamentary Labour Party and trade unions. The 1979 defeat enabled party activists to push through many internal democratic reforms, strengthening the standing of the Constituency Labour parties within the Labour Party as a whole. If Labour is defeated, the clash between the Constituencies and the Parliamentary Labour Party will become increasingly bitter as each tries to blame the other for the debacle. If Labour wins, the Constituencies will be determined to insure that the party's manifesto commitments are implemented rapidly. Even though the Constituency Labour Party will not have Livingstone in Parliament, there will undoubtedly be a bevy of new MPs, including possibly one member of the Militant Tendency (a Trotskyist sect that has been embedded in the Labour Party since 1956).

If by some miracle Labour wins on June 9, the victory would have important repercussions for the peace movement throughout Europe. For no matter what else might or might not happen, everyone agrees that Cruise missiles would not be stationed here. So for this reason alone a Labour victory would be the first step toward a nuclear-free Europe.

Europe. But this thought is sadly utopian. A Labour majority appears impossible. Even optimists are merely hoping for a "hung Parliament"—where no party has an overall majority. That this would be regarded as a defeat for the Tories and a victory for their opponents indicates the desperate state in which the British labor movement now finds itself.

Tariq Ali is an active member of the Hornsey Labour Party and is on the editorial board of the *New Left Review*.



Even with four million unemployed, Thatcher has significant working-class support.

ain would be on the eve of a pre-revolutionary upheaval.

Yet Thatcher's remarks reflect the right-wing populism marking this election campaign. The Tories of yesterday have almost been silenced. Gone is the semi-patrician aloofness, the upperclass witticism and the carefully cultivated image of the grouse moor. Instead of Lord Home and Harold MacMillan, there is Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit.

Four million people are out of work, yet every opinion poll predicts a Tory victory. While British socialists commemorate the centenary of Karl Marx's death, the working class appears on the verge of re-electing the most right-wing government since the '30s. It is a cruel irony.

The 1979 Conservative electoral victory marked a turning point in post-war British politics. For the first time since the construction of the 1943-48 welfare state, there was an across-the-board repudiation of the shared Keynesian premises of successive Tory and Labour governments, in the name of free-market principles. The revitalized ideology of unashamed capitalism championed the aspirations of the

from the obstinate defense of the Wilson-Callaghan years by the present Labour leadership—a defense motivated by the needs of internal factional struggles rather than winning votes.

Despite all this, Thatcher's brutal use of unemployment to raise profits and tame unions at the same time began to alienate support. The tightly knit British establishment worried that this could lead to election of a left-wing Labour government. The media blatantly encouraged a section of the Labour right to split and form its own party as a "moderate" alternative to Thatcher and Tony Benn. Thus when some former members of the Labour Cabinet (Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers and David Owen) formed the Social Democratic Party (SPD), it got the full treatment from Fleet Street. This new party, formed in alliance with the old Liberal Party, appeared well set to hold the balance of power in any new Parliament. Then came the Falklands war.

Had the war gone badly, Thatcher would have fallen and the Tories would have suffered a decisive defeat at the

Peace

Continued from page 3
omists for Peace."

The decision to hold the convention in West Berlin had aroused considerable misgivings. Last December Soviet Peace Committee chairman Yuri Zhukov complained that bringing a "so-called 'German question' into discussion at the convention" was an attempt to "challenge the inviolability of the post-war European frontiers," violate the Helsinki agreement and revise the status of West Berlin. Much of the German peace movement was uneasy that the discussion might take a nationalist turn and stayed away. As it turned out, the workshops and forum on the "German question" were sober and scholarly.

It is only reasonable that the peace movement, in its rejection of the bloc system, reflect on its origins in the Soviet-U.S. deadlock over what to do about Germany. Some of the German organizers hoped to merge the problem of the two Germanys' enforced hostility and limited sovereignty into a broad vision of Europe shared by the peace movement as a whole. A modest start was made, but not many non-Germans paid much attention and some even shied away, complaining that they already had enough

problems.

More conspicuous was SPD foreign policy expert Egon Bahr, trying to save his *Ostpolitik* from the errors of former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (who, people muttered, got us into this Euromissile mess to begin with) and the Americans' change of strategy. Bahr was there promoting his suggestion that countries neither owning nor controlling nuclear weapons may say "no" to having them stationed on their soil.

"Let nuclear arms stay with the countries so proud to possess them," he said.

Bahr explained to the convention that his idea had been enthusiastically received by members of the international Palme commission (representing almost all the powers that be) except representatives of four nuclear powers. So in an effort to achieve unanimity, his idea was dropped out of the final report on "Common Security" and tacked onto the end as a personal comment. The moral of Bahr's story: there is a fundamental conflict of interest between nuclear and non-nuclear states that cuts across alliances.

Bahr said he had voted for the famous "double-track" decision (to station missiles if negotiations failed) in December 1979 "with misgivings, because it was the only way to get the U.S. to negotiate." Now he feared that "the test of strength" that will develop between the German government and the movement if deployment starts this fall "could transform the republic."

Then why, movement people shouted at him, don't you and Willy Brandt make it clear right now that you will also be out in the streets protesting against the missiles? That would make West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl think twice.

Bahr replied that Kohl's government needed pressure from the movement. "One difference between the peace movement and the SPD is that the peace movement can and must raise absolute demands," he said. "The SPD cannot raise absolute demands if it is to preserve its influence in Washington and Moscow."

Enter the Greens.

The SPD's double-track schizophrenia was upstaged once again by the Green Party. Party leader Petra Kelly and retired General Gerd Bastian captured headlines by leading two of their fellow Green Bundestag members into East Berlin, where they unfurled banners calling for nuclear disarmament "in East and West" and "Swords into Ploughshares." After a few minutes they were taken to police headquarters for questioning and then released.

Convention organizers were alarmed that East German authorities would choose to interpret the Greens' surprise action as the "hostile provocation" that they had been predicting since END decided to meet in Berlin. Privately, there was harsh criticism of the Greens' action, which many feared could lead to further crackdowns on the independent Protes-

tant peace movement that originated the "Swords into Ploughshares" emblem.

But lo and behold, out of the mysterious East came a friendly letter from East German leader Erich Honecker to the Greens saying he regretted he had not had a chance to receive them personally and expressing his agreement with their appeal to both German states to work for disarmament.

So there were sighs of relief, especially among the Berliners. It had been possible, after all, to hold such a meeting in Berlin, to discuss East-West relations and even the super-sensitive "German question" without anything dramatic happening. And the hundreds of peace activists from all over the world may have had a chance, in this strangely wounded city, to reflect on the absurdity of a Cold War that is a way of keeping World War II going on forever and ever between the victorious allies.

Next year END will hold its third convention in Italy. As former Comiso mayor Giacomo Cagnes pointed out in Berlin, the Cruise missiles to be installed in Sicily will not threaten the Soviets so much as North Africa and the Mideast. Thus, while the second convention in Berlin naturally tended to concentrate on the East-West stalemate, the third convention in Italy will focus more on North-South relations between the industrialized countries and the Third World. The question, raised by Saarbrücken mayor Lafontaine in Berlin, is whether Europeans are going to let themselves be drawn into a U.S.-dictated NATO strategy aimed not at their defense but at the protection of raw materials in the Third World.

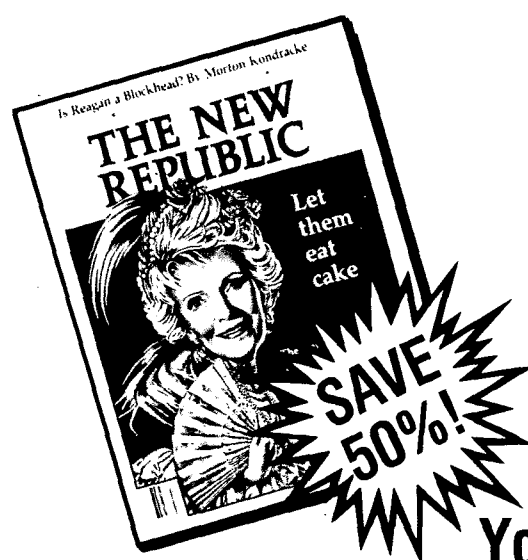
Yale

Continued from page 6

—Siegel O'Connor & Kainen, the largest of its kind in the state—that Yale had hired.

When the firm tried to delay National Labor Relations Board hearings, the union was ready with arguments and a publicity blitz. And when the vote drew near, it also anticipated the flood of propaganda that the firm instructed Yale's Labor Relations Office to send out daily to C&Ts in the campus mail. In one instance, the firm's booklet quoted half a sentence from a union contract saying that if a brother union had a strike, the C&Ts would have to walk off their jobs as well. The omitted half of the sentence said that rule applied only if the unions involved had a joint executive council—which Local 34 won't have with other locals. To combat the false charges, Local 34 issued its own hard-hitting newsletters and news releases.

Perhaps the tensest moment of the campaign for some supporters came during the eve of the vote tallying. NLRB officials, seated with Yale and union officials, counted all 2,495 ballots aloud, one by one. The margin remained close the entire two hours and 45 minutes.



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Then suddenly Wilhelm thrust his hands, locked together, into the air. Bedlam broke out as unionists jumped up and down and hugged each other.

At the post-election celebration at a local union hall, Wilhelm sounded a conciliatory note. "It's not very often that anybody licks Yale," he said. "We must stretch out our arms. We need those who voted no." For although the union pulled off an inspiring victory, more hard work—negotiating a contract and building the local—lies ahead. ■

Paul Bass is a reporter for the *New Haven Advocate*.

Cities

Continued from page 2

But coops have limits: financing, recruitment of entrepreneurial initiative as well as the usual perils of small businesses. Inevitably, mayors—including leftists—must work with private business. On the whole, leftists correctly emphasize public improvements as an economic stimulus rather than tax and other concessions to business.

But in a few cases cities are becoming entrepreneurs in partnership with business. During the '70s, Hartford, Conn., under the leadership of populist Nicholas Carbone, brought economic development to a declining city in a new way. Rather than clear land and turn it over to developers for bargain rates, offer tax rebates and hope the city would benefit, the city under Carbone became a business partner. The city's land as well as a reduction in taxes were converted into partial ownership of the new developments. As a holder of equity, the city gained revenue from the profits of the projects. Then as the inner city was improved, the value of its equity (and other landholdings) also increased—thanks to the public initiative. The city captured part of this increase and in some cases remortgaged its share to gain more money to expand elsewhere.

The other strategy is outright municipal ownership, under consideration in Santa Cruz, Santa Monica and Burlington, which already has a municipal electric company from an earlier era. Cable TV is a new attractive candidate for city ownership. As cities find it difficult to raise taxes, even some middle-of-the-road municipalities in California are seeking new revenues through city enterprises.

Especially when a public role is often essential in stimulating development, why should private owners profit exclusively? "Cities have to go into profit-making businesses," says William Domhoff, professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz. "Cities are based in land and rents. The city is a growth machine controlled by local land owners. Local elites prepare land for capitalist development. Capitalists make profit, landlords make rents. The city should capture increased land value. But capitalists and landlords hate the thought that the city would not be dependent on their tax revenue."

Non-socialist mayors can undertake these reforms, but they will be attacked

as socialists. So why not run as a socialist anyway? Eventually, it will be necessary to confront that bugaboo of American politics. Socialists in power acknowledge that declaring themselves socialists creates some problems, brings little new support and, at best, is ignored. Yet they believe their public presence may help build a broader political movement.

Whatever else they accomplish, leftists in power locally have brought more people, especially the previously powerless into politics and government. With neighborhood planning councils, greater city worker self-management, open deliberations and encouragement of community organizations, political democracy has flourished, even though supporters have a tendency to defer to their newly elected officials rather than to keep up the same political mobilization that was necessary when they were on the outs.

No, there isn't socialism in one city today anymore than in 1912. But the value of victory surpasses the value of ideological purity. Socialists in one city—and especially many cities—can bring significant changes in property rights, reform city government and increase democratic participation and control. They can demonstrate that there are alternatives on the left that work better for the majority of residents than the failed policies of the old-guard conservatives or of the liberals who are usually sent in to fight the left on behalf of traditional property rights. They can continue to point toward another vision of society. In these times, that's enough to cheer about. ■

Africa

Continued from page 8

trolled. They operate formally but the practical effect of their leadership is not felt.... The people's assemblies have an unparalleled role in the organization of our state. Their development must give them an increasing role in the management of state and social affairs both through mobilization of the people and through the state apparatus that is subordinate to them at every level."

Following that criticism of the people's assemblies, Machel warned party delegates against uncritically reproducing Marxist-Leninist forms not rooted in Mozambican reality. "We understand and assimilate Marxism-Leninism," he contended, "when it is possible to relate it to our own historical experience, our traditions, our culture, the environment in which we live and the class struggle in our country."

Several peasants and rural workers took seriously FRELIMO's call for a new spirit of self-criticism. For instance, Augusto Lígona from Zambezia province outlined how production on his agricultural cooperative plummeted after the government stopped providing basic commodities that the peasants had bought with money they received from their crops.

But the most powerful critique came from Jose Nchumali, a former freedom

fighter who currently manages the state sugar plantation at Buzi. He bluntly accused the Central Committee and government of being infiltrated by the enemy. Machel responded that it was not a question of enemy infiltration, but rather that senior officials had succumbed to the corruption of comfort. According to a member of the FRELIMO Secretariat, Nchumali's real message was that people in the countryside were worried that party and state leaders had been compromised by corruption and had lost the will and the capacity to fight the South African-backed MNR.

Chumali and several other government critics were elected to the Central Committee and several junior ministers and national directors responsible for major economic projects were not. Although this decision reflects in part the desire to separate the party and state apparatus, it also indicates FRELIMO's intention to cultivate greater grassroots representation.

Despite indications that the Mozambican leadership is attempting to respond to people's basic social and economic concerns, Mozambique's serious economic problems and the MNR threat continue. And the battle against the state apparatus' tendencies toward centralization is just beginning. ■

Allen Isaacman, a professor of history at the University of Minnesota, is co-author of a forthcoming study, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982*. He was also a professor of African history at the University Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique from 1978-79.

Robert Coles on INTELLECTUALS

For many years, as I have worked, trying to understand how all sorts of families make do, often against considerable odds, I have written articles and books for interested fellow citizens. Soon enough, I have received the expected responses. But on one score I confess to perplexity, even alarm—an absence, almost total, of reaction when it comes to an entire side of my work. I refer to the descriptions I've rendered of the religious thoughts and feelings of the children and adults I've come to know.

All I need do, it seems, is come up with a social conclusion, make a psychological generalization, attempt a literary analysis, try portraying a certain kind of personal or regional life, and there are thoughtful (appreciatively or reprovingly so) correspondents willing to share their evaluations publicly. But when I have tried to describe how, say, an old Spanish-speaking woman from northern New Mexico, or a Southern black child, or an Appalachian white child, or a small-town working-class man happen to feel about Jesus and His words and deeds, then the result is either the silence already mentioned, or rarely, a puzzled, frustrated truculence: "I don't see why you get yourself into all that religious talk! If you're trying to prove that people are superstitious, or need a crutch, then a page is enough, not a chapter or half a book!"

In my own case, the attention given religious faith is held even more suspect because I'm a psychiatrist—and so, presumably, "educated" and "perceptive" enough (so I was told in another friendly letter!) to "know better"! I should be what an intellectual ought to be—someone who analyzes how others think and feel, who gives reasons for one or another moment of history. The civil rights struggle, for instance: I ought have kept my mind on the various "variables" that prompted it.

Meanwhile, there is this young man from Birmingham, Alabama, speaking in 1965: "I don't

know why I said no to segregation. I'm just another white Southerner, and I wasn't brought up to love integration! But I was brought up to love Jesus Christ, and when I saw the police of this city use dogs on people, I asked myself what Jesus would have done—and that's all I know about how I came to be here, on the firing line!"

Intellectuals also need to document how people's beliefs prompt them to live their lives. And I fear that when I started doing that I learned something about myself and my kind—how arrogant and self-centered we risk becoming: interested in our own heady assertions, and anxious to be the spokespersons for all those others, who don't write and teach and come up with new ideas, but who rather, try to go from one day to the next, and who yes, in large numbers indeed, keep calling on Jesus, not the intellectuals, for guidance. —from the June 1982 *NEW OXFORD REVIEW*.

If you are interested in exploring the beliefs behind the "data"—in probing the deeper religious feelings embedded in our lives, however much we try to ignore them—if you want to *understand* what moves a Martin Luther King Jr., a Lech Walesa, an Archbishop Romero, a Mother Teresa, a Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Polish Pope, a Simone Weil, a Dorothy Day, a George Orwell, then you're ready to look into the *NEW OXFORD REVIEW*. We are spearheading the renewed interest among today's intellectuals in what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." Robert Coles writes a regular column called "Harvard Diary," and like him, our writers—Peter L. Berger, J.M. Cameron, Erazim Kohák, Juli Loesch, Dale Vree, and others—express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and "heart." Published monthly, we have been praised by *Newsweek* for being "thoughtful," and the *Library Journal* predicts we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

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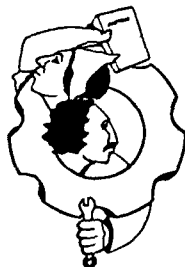
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Song of Steeltown

By Joel Schechter

MARC BLITZSTEIN'S labor opera, *The Cradle Will Rock*, almost closed before it opened in 1937 despite the advance sale of 20,000 tickets to unions. Federal officials invaded the theater where the prounion musical was rehearsing. Fearing that the work-in-progress would offend Congress, the invaders prohibited further use of government

property in this project of the WPA. To resist what they regarded as government censorship, producer John Houseman and director Orson Welles found another New York house in which the opera could open, without scenery. On opening night, Marc Blitzstein had to play the songs himself on a piano while the cast sang and spoke roles from their seats in the audience in order to comply with union and contractual obligations. Houseman and Welles were soon fired from the WPA's Federal Theater Project for their "insubordination," but the opera went on to achieve popularity after the two men produced it independently at the Mercury Theater.

Nearly half a century later, Houseman is back in New York with the opera again. He has revived it with an ensemble of actors who studied with him at Juilliard, and this group, the Acting Company, will continue to perform the piece on a national tour over the next six months. Each night, before Blitzstein's songs are performed at the American Place Theater in New York, John Houseman now introduces the opera by retelling the story of its opening night in 1937. His account of the defiant, almost illegal evening, followed by a new performance of *The Cradle Will Rock*, recreates an important moment in the history of American political theater. Blitzstein's 46-year-old opera is slightly out of date—but the revival is no mere evening of nostalgia. It is nostalgic to a degree, but it conveys a sense of the work's original provocativeness. Its pleasantly agit-prop art form also holds promise for sequels—for pro-union, anti-corporate musicals that are lively and biting.

The opera set in Steeltown USA portrays a mythical company town where the factory owner controls everything but the unions. Alternately melodramatic and satiric scenes show a villainous industrialist, Mr. Mister, increasing his profits from war, payoffs and cheap labor. He buys control of the local newspaper and requires its editor to frame a union leader. He pays the local minister, Reverend Salvation, to endorse World War I.

Continued on page 22



Scenes from a proletarian opera (left) and office workplace drama (center and right), which recently appeared on the New York stage.

The automated

By Myles Gordon

TIME THEFT. SEDIMENTATION. Impacted office. "User-friendly ergonomic design." Deskilling. Displacement. This is the language of office automation. It's a code for the "interface" between the computers that increasingly set the rhythm and work requirements in today's offices and the millions of predominantly women office workers whose jobs are determined by them.

It's jargon that's also sprinkled throughout the dialog in *The Department*, a new play by Barbara Garson that was staged at New York's Theater For the New City last month. The play offers a vivid picture of how changes in



the workplace affect office workers and features sharp dialog, but at times is more informative than entertaining. Garson plans to work further on the play before taking it to other cities.

Starting with an oral history project by Women Office Workers (WOW), a discussion group was created and Garson, author of the satirical anti-Vietnam play *MacBird*, sat in.

"On its own the group would have just liked to kvetch," she said. But Garson took things further by writing their testimony (some of it verbatim) into the script for a play and casting some of the women to play themselves in the New York production.

One of the actors, Cindy Jordan, is a Hispanic woman who started as a xerox



Georges Melles

office cometh

clerk with a large computer company five years ago. "I can tell you the exact date and time when the tide turned against me," she told *In These Times*. "I said to my boss, 'Please—I've been xeroxing for six months here. I would really like to learn something about computers.' Oh my God! For the last four and a half years it's been a nightmare."

Cindy's role in the play is the same it's been in real life. She applies for a supervisory position, but is instead ordered to train a 28-year-old man for the job. "They're not picking my brain," she says. "They want my knowledge, let them pay me."

Before the performance, Vi Torbett, who had been a secretary for the past 14 years after raising a family, asked Cindy in their dressing room how someone could be made a supervisor without

papers, returning his wife's underwear to Bloomingdale's. She's there because her old job went to a computer and she was assigned "someplace you'd be happier."

Woman vs. machine.

Garson sees that automation is more than simply (wo)man vs. machine. Mirva, a young Hispanic character in the play, expresses a naive American optimism even as the quality control people come snooping around to see how they can make the women's job supposedly "easier." She says, "Perhaps if someone was a little willing to learn about the new machine we might get a little more money...."

Garson says she had the most trouble with the men's roles—the middle managers who are only dimly aware of the changes "this second industrial revolution" has in store for them as well. Gross slowly learns his department is being inspected by "efficiency experts" and that his job is on the line. (He is saved at the play's end when his long-suffering wife phones her bank-owner father who merges one of his banks with Gross', thus ending the efficiency drive.)

Even those at the top are anxious about the changes brought by computers. Mr. Block, one of the bank's directors, gingerly asks outside consultant Vickie Stone who she reports to. Echoing the fears of the bank's clerical workers, he asks Stone if she's there "to make my job easier."

It's been predicted that office computerization will increase job (and class) stratification, replacing the old corporate pyramid with a barbell-shaped structure—executives on top, a slim number of middle managers and increasingly "proletarianized" clerical workers operating computers down below in what Garson calls "the new sweatshops."

The play's climax comes when Block's assistant, Michael, resentful that he's not heading the automation drive, gets a job in Gross' department posing as a woman so he can write a report from the inside. However, he's chosen to test a secret weapon in management's arsenal—a new sci-fi video terminal that makes the operator an extension of the machine. Eliminating the 3/10 of a second lost in refocusing the eyes from paper to screen and back, Michael is strapped into a dentist's chair as read-outs are projected on a pair of goggles, their progression regulated not by a punch key but by a mere blink of his eyes. The computer consultant proclaims: "No screen, no paper, no eyestrain, no com-

prehension. And thus the clerical worker becomes a professional, supervising herself."

But even without this touch of science fiction, the facts of today's computerized offices are frightening enough. *The Department's* most moving character is Sharon, based on a woman Garson worked with when she briefly held a job in Banker's Trust securities department. Sharon, a black woman, describes the Dickensian scene beneath Wall Street, where hundreds of mostly black and Hispanic women sit all day long in front of their computer terminals in a cavernous, windowless basement office.

"Two weeks after they put in the screens they called me in to a glass room on the twelfth floor," Sharon says. "This white kid with a leather blazer... pushes a few buttons on his keyboard and he shows me a screen full of numbers... Four floors away he could count every mistake and tell me the exact second I stopped to scratch my nose. 'If you want to stay here you'll have to come up to your quota.' 'Quota? What Quota?' 'By now you should be up to



Jeff Schwarz

15,000 key strokes an hour. Are you sure you have no problems at home?"

"Fifteen thousand key strokes an hour! You sit there in one position all day staring into the screen. Your neck aches, your eyes burn, you can't even turn your head. I never had headaches before. And my kid says, 'Ma, what did we do? You're always angry!'"

Myles Gordon covers New York for a number of news outlets.

By Marie France

IN AN UNUSUAL MOVE THE COMMUNICATIONS Workers of America (CWA) commissioned non-union member Jeahane Dyllan to write and star in a play about organizing a small telecommunications plant in Memphis. The play, *Lineman and Sweet Lightnin'*, made a one-night debut in Washington, D.C., before going on a national tour, which includes a June 6 performance at the CWA convention in Los Angeles.

Dyllan, who created Union Sisters Productions to promote dramatizations of issues that concern women and workers, has already written and starred in a play about Karen Silkwood. This is the first time a union has used her services directly, however, and she hopes the play will encourage similar collaborations to explore the union movement through art.

With that as her purpose, Dyllan created two characters—Lineman and Lightnin'—to evoke the tension between what is idealistic and what is practical, between old male pros and new world women, between old and new union issues.

Lineman is the union professional, who knows the ins and outs of organizing and bargaining with management. Lightnin' is the newcomer, who is drawn to the union out of frustration and sorrow. It is individual woes, those of the mothers who make up the majority at the plant, that prompt Lightnin' to seek help.

For her, the issue is not so much better wages but more humane conditions. She wants management to recognize workers in the context of their daily lives and not just the workplace. Since management won't cooperate, she wants a union in the plant that will help the alcoholic worker and to get time off for the woman whose child is dying of leukemia. When Lineman helps her organize the plant to vote union, she is ecstatic. The narrow margin of the union victory doesn't worry her.

But Lineman, the old union pro, does not want to hear the "soap operas" that fuel Lightnin's enthusiasm. Not that he is

Continued on page 22



Jeff Schwarz

knowing the work. Cindy answered that management "knows you're going to do the job because economically where are you going?"

In her job Torbett has not been promoted for three years while being shunted around from department to department, trailed by undocumented allegations of "unsatisfactory work." Yet she's now doing the work of two secretaries and operating a word processor to boot.

In *The Department*, she plays the senior secretary in a bank's accounting office. She runs flack for their department head, Mr. Gross—taking calls from his three girlfriends, lending a sympathetic ear to his wife who doesn't know all that's going on, typing his kid's term

EDITORIAL

Ronald Reagan is correct about one thing: the outcome of his campaign to save the brutal and corrupt regime in El Salvador and to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua will, in his words, "shape America's image throughout the world."

Reagan made clear, in his May 20 speech in Miami, the image he longs for, that of Teddy Roosevelt's "big stick." Unfortunately for him, but fortunately for the rest of the world, that image is not only 80 years out of date, but also out of style. The era when the United States could treat the Caribbean as its private lake and when presidents could send the Marines into any Latin American nation at will to "protect the interests" of corporate predators is gone. In fact, no one, not even Reagan himself, can publicly justify overt, covert, or the new-style overtly covert intervention on the grounds that we are protecting the United Fruit Company or its present-day equivalents.

Instead, from Reagan to the recycled Cold War liberals of the *New Republic*, intervention must be justified on one of two grounds. The first, acceptable across the board, is that what has happened in Nicaragua and what is happening in El Salvador is the result, in Jeane Kirkpatrick's words, of "determined efforts by Marxist-Leninists to conquer other countries by force." Or, in the words of a *New Republic* writer, that Nicaragua is both "exporting tyranny and a Soviet base" (Charles Krauthammer, May 9). The second ground, preferred by those who like to think of themselves as upholders of social progress, is that "they have betrayed their own revolution" (they always betray their revolution, especially if they expropriate corporate property).

But these rationales for intervention by the United States in the internal affairs of its southern neighbors can be believed only by those unaware of the long history of imperial dominance and control of the region by successive administrations. In this century the underlying policy of protecting corporate investments and other interests in Latin America has had three faces. The first, which lasted from the days of the Spanish-American War until the New Deal, consisted of unabashed armed intervention and occupation by the Marines whenever the natives became restless. It was the period of Teddy Roosevelt's "big stick" and the source of Reagan's nostalgia.

That period ended with the Great Depression, which required a more subdued approach and led to Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," enunciated in 1933 and marked by the withdrawal of American troops from Nicaragua that year and from Haiti in 1934, as well as by Roosevelt's decision not to send troops into Cuba when the Gerardo Machado government was overthrown in 1933.

Hemisphere policeman.

The Good Neighbor Policy, and American preoccupation with Nazi aggression in Europe and with Japanese expansion in Asia led to a relatively uneventful period of relations between the U.S. and Latin America, lasting until the end of World War II. But in the immediate post-war years, with movements for national independence popping up throughout what was soon to become known as the Third World, concern mounted about the possibilities of revolution in our "backyard." Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson expressed this directly in 1946. "I am afraid," he said, "that the good neighbor policy has put serious obstacles in the path of the exercise of the Monroe doctrine." The United States, he insisted, needed "a freer hand as a policeman in this hemisphere." With the Truman ad-



The man in the gray furry bearskin

ministration already putting pressure on the Soviet Union to limit its intervention in Eastern Europe, Stimson told John McCloy, his assistant secretary of war, that "it's not asking too much to have our little region over here which never has bothered anyone." McCloy agreed. "We ought to have our cake and eat it too," he said. We ought to be free to operate under this regional arrangement in South America and at the same time intervene promptly in Europe.

But the post-war years no longer allowed him the kind of direct intervention that had once been routine. A new arrangement was needed, and this was attempted and partially realized in the formation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948.

The Pact of Bogota, which set up the OAS, provided for peaceful settlement of

disputes and included an agreement on economic cooperation that pledged all signatories to treat foreign capital fairly and not to expropriate foreign-owned property without just compensation. Seven Latin American delegations, however, attached specific reservations to their ratification agreements on this point, and also secured sections prohibiting political, military or economic intervention in the affairs of any state "on any grounds whatever."

But in a move that laid the groundwork for subsequent interventions, the U.S. won approval of a special resolution declaring "international communism" to be "incompatible with the concept of American freedom."

On paper, it was a standoff. But in real life, the U.S. continued to intervene, "covertly" in Guatemala in 1954 and Cuba in 1962, overtly in the Dominican

Republic in 1965, and covertly again in Chile in 1972, each time on the grounds of "fighting Communism."

Revulsion at intervention.

Then came the American defeat in Vietnam in 1974, and with it a period of popular revulsion with American intervention to prevent Third World nations from determining their own futures. While the Cold War, and Soviet aid to revolutionary governments in Cuba and Vietnam, somewhat complicated the picture, there was nevertheless a growing understanding that the underlying motive for American intervention was to protect the system of corporate investment, not to uphold or protect democracy. And there was overwhelming popular opposition to involving American military forces, overtly or covertly, in Third World wars. Enough so that even Congress was moved to pass resolutions against covert intervention in Angola and, more recently, against covert efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

That latter resolution is, of course, the source of Reagan's current claims that the American-sponsored invasions of Nicaragua are simply attempts to persuade that nation to stop giving aid to the rebels in El Salvador. Anyone with half a brain—and that includes most members of Congress—knows that the Reagan administration is doing its best to overthrow the Sandinista government. Indeed, it is not even clear that the Nicaraguans are still giving aid to the Salvadoran rebels. But the fiction and the all-but-open flouting of the law by Reagan are allowed to pass by a Congress that will act decisively only under intense popular pressure.

Meanwhile, throughout Latin America, not to mention the rest of the world, the image of the United States appears more and more predatory. The overtly clandestine activities of the U.S. Air Force in Panama have caused relations with that country and the U.S. to become strained. As a Defense Department official has admitted, the increased American presence in Panama threatens to undermine Panama's standing among its Latin neighbors, and to spur anti-American sentiment in that country. The Panamanians agreed to let the U.S. keep four C-130 cargo planes at Howard Air Base, a senior Defense Department official told the *New York Times*, but only on condition that their presence not be publicized. Yet in recent weeks the base has been "swarming" with U.S. military aircraft hauling weapons and ammunition to El Salvador and Honduras, and the Panamanian government is beginning to feel uneasy. Our "covert" activity there has become too overt, and although Reagan likes the image, even a government as "friendly" as Panama's cannot chance it.

A different way of seeing things.

Distorted as it is, Reagan's simple-minded railing against Soviet bases spreading like measles across Central America does reflect an historical process well under way (though very far from realization). That process, which has been the central fact in world politics throughout this century, has been the worldwide movement toward socialism and the worldwide efforts of ruling capitalists to prevent it. Yet this has not been a Soviet plot. The attempts to establish socialism have been as varied as the historical conditions in which the attempts have been made. The more these attempts are put down by force, especially by an outside force, the more likely they are to be violent and to reject the values and political forms of those who intervene to prevent self-determination. The more Reagan takes up the big stick, the more fellow cavemen he will generate in Central America. It is an image the world can well do without. ■

LETTERS

In These Times is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

CIRCLE THE CRITICS

JOHN JUDIS (*ITT*, MAY 4) DEALS WELL with problems raised by ideological attacks that attempt to link together, in guilt by association, people with divergent views. Any student of history knows that this has been all too common in political controversy in this country. Unfortunately, it happens on the left as well as on the right.

Three of Judis' critics (*ITT*, May 11) take issue with him on the place of William Colby in the nuclear freeze movement and by the same sort of elision of arguments they make him *ipso facto* a defender of "war criminals." Now the issue is no longer Colby's place in the freeze movement, but the absence of common civility, not to say courtesy or comradeship in dealing with differences of opinion.

The question arises, "With friends like these, who needs enemies?" Can we not discuss differences of policy and tactics without internecine blood-letting? Must it always be true that when the left makes up a firing squad it forms a circle?

—John Leininger
Waverly, Ohio

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

JOHN JUDIS HAS RECENTLY TAKEN A lot of criticism and abuse from *ITT* readers.

I would have worded some of his responses differently, but Judis should get a round of applause: for requesting "standards of reason and coherence" in political debate; for defending freedom of speech (even for those in charge of the Reagan administration's pathetic crusade in Central America); and for trying to move the left away from its moralistic view of the world.

If Judis is rewarded for his courage by being driven into the ranks of the *New Republic* (or elsewhere), *ITT* and the left will be poorer as a result.

—Paul Jaffe
Knoxville, Tenn.

FREEZE

I WAS PLEASED TO SEE SUSAN JAFFE'S interview with Rep. Edward Markey (*ITT*, May 18). Having been involved in the freeze movement for a year and a half, I am grateful to Markey for serving as the major freeze advocate in the House. He certainly deserved the publicity.

Even so, I dispute Markey's contention that the six-week freeze debate educated anyone or changed many minds. A more candid description would be a standoff: freeze advocates defeated every weakening amendment except one (the time-limit for the achievement of weapons reductions), yet were unable to cut off redundant debate. Despite the addition of 26 new Democrats in the 1982 elections—most of whom were known or presumed to be pro-freeze—freeze forces, led by House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Clement Zablocki (D-Wis.) and his deputy Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) were repeatedly unable to bring the debate to a close.

My former representative, John Seiberling (D-Ohio), a solid freeze supporter, wrote me shortly after the May 4 vote that after a point, the House debate ceased to clarify or educate and

had become a "filibuster" demeaning to the freeze. My present representative, Dennis Eckart (D-Ohio), another solid freeze advocate, expressed much the same view.

One of several reasons that explains the mixed fate of the freeze in the House was a certain, and perhaps predictable, lack of commitment to the concept by some erstwhile sponsors. Many members of Congress seem to think they can support a freeze and continue to vote for new weapons spending. This became lamentably evident when the House Appropriations subcommittee voted days after the freeze passage to proceed with development of the MX.

What was their excuse for this? A letter from President Reagan assuring them that he would try for progress in Geneva if they agreed to keep the MX alive. At times during the freeze debate, advocates and opponents seemed more bent on proving their mutual dedication to anti-Sovietism and a "strong defense" than anything else. That was certainly the gist of many floor speeches on May 4.

There is no question that the House's passage of the freeze resolution on May 4 was a great achievement for the freeze movement. But peace activists should be warned by the weakness of the debate that we have a long way to go before we obtain a Congress committed to a reversal of the arms race. Had there been a few dozen Ron Dellumses in the House during that debate, I think we would have seen a decisive break with useless Cold War conservative—Cold War liberal disputes over how best to combat "Communism." This should suggest what peace or freeze activists should be doing in 1984.

—Mim Jackson
Kent, Ohio, Nuclear Freeze

925

I READ DAVID MOBERG'S ARTICLE ON District 925 SEIU (*ITT*, March 30) with interest. But a more balanced view of their activities, at least in Chicago, is important because of the recent election here that was so heartening to progressives all over the country.

I write in sadness because of my long personal and political relationship with the leaders of 925. But 925, unfortunately, has allied itself with Locals 25 and 46 of the SEIU, among the more conservative unions in Illinois. Gene Moats, the head of SEIU in Illinois and of Local 25, was a strong Byrne supporter in the recent primary election, supported Republican Governor Jim Thompson enthusiastically in November over the Democratic endorsement by the State AFL-CIO and voted in the AFL-CIO Board for the State Federation to oppose the "rules change" on the Equal Rights Amendment. When women's groups asked 925 President Karen Nussbaum to intervene on ERA, she declined, citing lack of influence.

When the library workers who make up AFSCME Local 1215 last year documented sex discrimination in the Byrne administration's employment and labor relations policies and asked the Chicago Federation of Labor to support their request for a free election on union representation, Gene Moats opposed calling such an election and blocked the CFL's support for these women library workers.

Since Harold Washington defeated

Moats' candidate in the primary, 925 has joined forces with Moats to conduct a joint organizing drive at these libraries where AFSCME has fought for the people for decades. Their literature boasts of their historical relationship in Chicago government—a relationship between themselves and the Democratic machine that brought no union benefits to city workers.

We are saddened to see sister trade unionists ally themselves with such entrenched champions of the status quo and believe it is important that people on the left have a more factual balanced view of 925's activities.

—Nancy Shler
Political Action Director
AFSCME Council 31, Chicago

BUSINESS, AS USUAL

KEITH SCHNEIDER DID A FINE JOB with the article on Industrial Bio Test (*ITT*, May 11). I first read some of IBT's studies while working as an agricultural consultant to attorneys representing a group of Michigan farmers whose farms and animals had been contaminated with an industrial fire retardant containing polybrominated biphenyls (PBB). One of the defendants in the Tacoma case, Velsicol Chemical Corporation, contracted with IBT to do several feeding studies on young dairy animals.

The inaccuracies, discrepancies and amateurish quality of these studies lead me to believe that the EPA is as much to blame for their reliance on IBT studies.

One of the feeding studies IBT presented at the Tacoma trial demonstrated that the test animals, in spite of their extremely high levels of PBB in body fat, showed no adverse effects on weight gain, health or organ tissue. Their conclusion was that Michigan farm animals, with their much lower levels, could not possibly have been harmed. In going over the study we discovered a curious fact. Given the reported levels of PBB, the test animals had several hundred times more PBB in their bodies than was fed to them at the start of the experiment. This is impossible. When confronted with this at trial, IBT claims that a consistent error had been made in their calculations. In spite of this so-called "error" and resulting corrections, one of the test animals still had more PBB in its body at the end of the experiment than was fed to it at the start.

It has been known for some time that IBT was a laboratory where chemical companies could simply pay for the re-

sults they wanted, but I never thought that they would admit it. The following exchange occurred at the Tacoma trial during the cross examination of Dr. Jenkins from IBT.

Q: "What I'm talking about is: do you discuss the wording of the ultimate written report if there's to be one with the sponsor? Is that common practice?"

A: "They may request that they don't like the language that you use, yes, and they may, for one reason or another, say that we don't want this stated in this way. Can you state this in another way. Can you state this in another way without impeaching your data."

Q: "Okay."

A: "And then if you want to get paid, you change it."

There were many of us at the start of the Tacoma trial who felt that if not the judicial system or government, the objective scientific community would find the truth and offer some measure of relief and comfort. Not so. It was business as usual.

—Fritz Hartley
Grand Rapids, Mich.

ON TARGET

CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND your reporters for the great job of reporting that you did on the Washington election. The series of articles is an excellent documentary of city politics and I have given them to the librarian of the junior high school to be placed on reference. You were the only newspaper that was on target. Good work.

—Shirley Higginbotham
New York, N.Y.

CORRECTION

A sentence was left out of last week's review of the Jacobo Timerman television docudrama. The review should read:

In the mid-'70s, the military junta threw out Isabel Peron's corrupt civilian government and proceeded to answer Argentina's military threat with one of the most brutal state terrorist operations in modern history. The military refers to all of this as its "final solution to subversion." The claim their action went beyond "good and evil" in service to the nation.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

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"I read *In These Times* and recommend it wherever I speak. It's must reading in these tumultuous times."

Maggie Kuhn,
National Convener of
the Gray Panthers

IN DEPTH

Progress, too, in Nicaragua

By E. Bradford Burns

MY GRINGO APPEARANCE attracted attention as I traveled for two weeks around Nicaragua by bus and boat. People constantly asked why I was there—not too many *norteamericanos* are in evidence these days—and what I thought of their revolution. Those were not always the first questions put to me, but eventually, sooner rather than later, they tumbled out.

As I moved from Managua to Esteli to Matagalpa to Granada to Bluefields and back to Managua, I was acutely aware of the changes that had overtaken the Nicaragua I had visited during the Somoza period. The people were as friendly as ever, but they now exuded a new pride and displayed a lively confidence. The revolution had touched every life. On balance, I concluded that its influence has been positive, at least on large numbers of the inhabitants.

Changes in education were immediately visible. People are studying and reading. More than a million Nicaraguans (40 percent of the population) are in school. The number of schools has doubled in the last four years. The government claims, and the United Nations verifies, that illiteracy has fallen from slightly more than 50 percent to approximately 10 percent.

The government has followed up its ambitious literacy campaign with efforts to open public libraries. Small libraries have sprung up in out-of-the-way and desolate places. In each spot I visited students who were conducting an aggressive fundraising drive to buy books for those libraries. The presses print a larger number of books and a greater variety of titles than ever before. I noted people reading everywhere, and much of what they read concerned Nicaragua's past.

The pace of cultural life in this nation of 2.5 million has quickened. I arrived just as the second annual Festival of New Latin American Music was ending. Dozens of Latin America's best known composers, singers and musicians had gathered to perform. During the week I spent in Nicaragua, the National Ballet of Cuba danced in the Ruben Dario Theater, a couple of French musicians played at the Experimental Theater and the Cafe-Libro offered nightly performances of poetry recitals, guitar music or play readings. Soliciting new recruits, the newspapers announced the opening of the academic year of the School of Modern Dance.

The Cinemateca showed a variety of world film classics. One afternoon as I passed by, I noticed an impressive line of young people waiting to see *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The principal press had just published an anthology of the best poems written by students, soldiers, workers and peasants in the ubiquitous Popular Poetry Workshops—proving that Nicaragua really is the land of poets.

Much emphasis also falls on improved health care. Nicaragua has practically eliminated measles and polio, diseases that only a few years ago took a heavy toll among the children. The two child-care centers I visited in Esteli both had small clinics. The new hospital in Bluefields, now half-finished, will be a model of its type, replacing a 90-year-old structure in precarious condition. Four years ago, that region—Southern Zelaya—had only 14 physicians to serve 80,000 people. Today, 44 doctors practice there. Despite the shortage of medicine, medical equipment and physicians, there has been progress. The government gives rural health care priority, extending medical attention to the entire population for the first time.

A proper diet partially explains the improving health of the Nicaraguans. Caloric intake has risen because more basic foods are now available to larger numbers of people. The Institute for Food and Development Policy of San Francisco reports that since 1978 corn production has risen 10 percent, bean production 45 percent and rice production 50 percent. The consumption of these three staples climbed 33 percent, 40 percent and 30 percent.

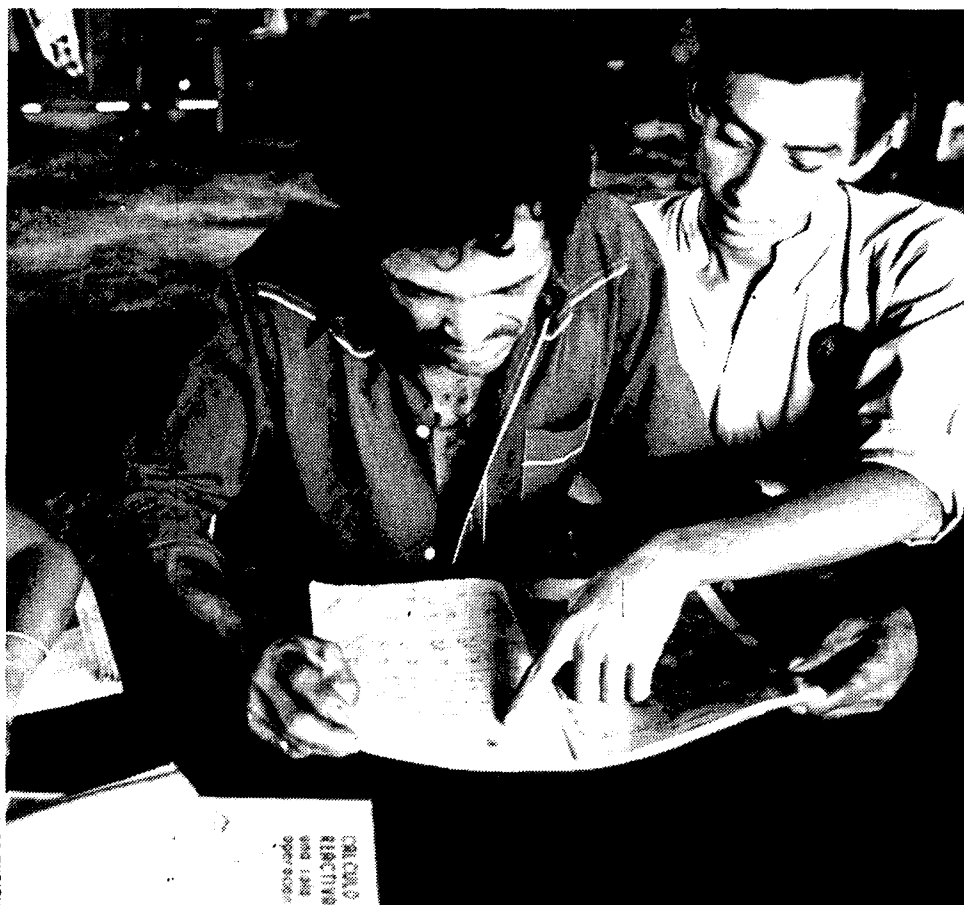
For the first time in generations, Nicaragua stands on the threshold of becoming self-sufficient in food. The achievement is unusual in Latin America, where nations import on an average of about 25 percent of their food. (Venezuela imports more than 50 percent of the food its people eat.)

A far-reaching agrarian reform provides land for anyone who wants it and will work it. As the largest nation in Central America, Nicaragua has more than enough land to go around. Since the reform only affects unused or underused lands, about 60 percent of the land remains in private hands, untouched by the reforms and untouchable so long as the owners work it efficiently. Putting the land into its most productive use to grow food for internal use and crops for export is the fundamental economic base upon which the revolution rests. That goal counters an old Nicaraguan—and Latin American—tradition of holding land for speculation, underusing the land and em-

phasizing the production of export crops rather than foods for the local markets.

These and other achievements are impressive, particularly since they came about despite the withdrawal of the traditional sources of technical and financial support from the U.S., and in the face of the border attacks from counterrevolutionaries sheltered in Honduras and, to a lesser extent, in Costa Rica.

Consequently, regarding the inevitable question from Nicaraguans of what I thought of their revolution, I could honestly answer that I was impressed. In that question and in the conversations that followed, I detected a strong current of



The number of schools in Nicaragua has doubled in the last four years and illiteracy has fallen from 50 percent to 10 percent.

pride and nationalism. Against formidable odds, they had defeated the well-armed troops of the *Guardia Nacional*, they had unseated a powerful dictator who for years enjoyed the blessings of the strongest power in this hemisphere. Now, they were trying to shape new institutions that would allow larger numbers of people to enjoy the benefits their nation afforded.

Nicaraguan nationalism has deep roots. The Nicaraguans look admiringly back to Augusto Cesar Sandino, who fought undefeated against the U.S. occupation forces between 1926 and 1933. Sandino's presence is everywhere—the walls plastered with his pictures, silhouettes and posters and the bookstores filled with books on his life, philosophy and ideas. By contrast, I didn't see one photograph of members of the present ruling junta.

Sandino, who dismissed Marxism and opposed Communism, said his ideas sprang from his own experiences, his long fight against the U.S. shaping his anti-imperialist views. The desire to rid his homeland of U.S. Marines consumed him. Beyond this well-articulated nationalistic and anti-imperialistic views, his ideas seem vague. He called for a popular political party and favored peasant cooperatives.

The dominant political philosophy in Nicaragua today is Sandinista—therefore it is basically and strongly nationalistic. But I fear that unremitting hostility and pressure from the U.S. will push these nationalists closer to the Communists, if not for ideology then for survival. Ironically, until now, the Sandinista government has repressed local Communists, even jailing some of the leaders, and is

cool, even hostile, to the Communist Party of Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguans are by no means uncritical of their present situation. They readily recognize the challenges still facing their country. In the Cafe-Libro, intellectuals discuss the many problems over coffee and beer. Admitting mistakes, they search for better solutions. Government officials can be disarmingly candid as well. As yet at any rate, they do not seem rigidly linked to any philosophy except Sandinista nationalism, although realistically they incline more toward socialist rather than capitalist solutions to the old problems that have bedeviled their nation.

The disgruntled certainly exist. Socialist solutions and broken ties with the U.S. unnerve the remnants of the former elite and middle classes. On Sunday afternoon as they gather around the swimming pools of the best hotels in Managua, their conversations quietly but inevitably touch on politics. Clearly they resent their loss of political power. A governmental apparatus favoring workers and peasants rattles them. They complain

about this or that shortage, one or another inconvenience. If you listen attentively, you will even hear an occasional sigh for "the good old days of Somoza."

They seemed to have taken heart, however momentarily, from President Reagan's April 27 speech. He employed the same simplistic terms of East vs. West, the pervasive Communist menace that characterizes their own world vision. They look to the strength of the U.S. as the only means to regain their former power.

Interestingly enough, Nicaraguan TV and radio carried Reagan's speech live. The press reported it in full. Everywhere the people discussed it in detail. Their direct access to Reagan's message impressed me. After all, only the week before, the U.S. government had refused to issue a visa to Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge so that he could visit the U.S., where at least three universities had invited him to speak. The State Department believed that his presence would not be "in the best interests" of this country and that he would use the opportunity for "propaganda purposes."

The refusal to permit Americans to hear alternative points of view strengthens the increasingly one-dimensional view of Nicaragua the U.S. government fosters. It deprives all of us of the opportunity to learn about the efforts a small and impoverished nation is making to develop, to learn from its failures as well as from its successes.

E. Bradford Burns, professor of History at UCLA, has written eight books on Latin America. The most recent is *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century*.

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Canopus in Argos: Archives Documents Relating to The Sentimental Agents In the Volyen Empire
By Doris Lessing
Knopf, 179 pp., \$12.95

By Roz Spafford

For anyone seriously involved in political work, *The Sentimental Agents*, the fifth in Doris Lessing's new series of novels, is megavitamin therapy. Or cold water in the face. Or a good shaking.

Roughly summed up, the book is a group of parables about how the sentimentality that infuses political work is usually the source of that work's undoing. Lessing sets these parables in the Volyen Empire—a planet, its two moons, and two neighboring planets. Here, the forces we have become familiar with in Lessing's earlier novels battle for control of history: conniving evil (Shammatt), saintly "necessity" (Canopus) and an advanced technological empire, peopled by creatures like ourselves (Sirius).

Incent, a young agent of Canopus, is falling under the sway of Rhetoric. He is assisted by Klorathy, a more experienced agent, whose reports back to Canopus are the book's frame. The "plot," as such, hangs on a set of questions: will Sirius invade the Volyens, or will the political re-examination that began in *The Sirian Experiments* (the third book) halt its mindless imperial-

tal therapists is to enable patients to work without a disabling susceptibility to emotion-laden words.

Administering a test to see whether Incent has recovered from his rhetorical illness, Klorathy reports:

The word historical caused his pulse to quicken, but then it steadied. At historical processes he remained firm. Perspective of history—so far so good. Winds of history—he showed signs of agitation. These did not decrease. I then decided, wrongly, to increase the dose, trying logic of history...but it was not until dustbin of history that I gave up.

Mirror on politics.

This hilarity soon turns tragic as events outside the hospital take shape, events that look more and more like repeated histories of our political movements.

Lessing's message—in this book and in the *Canopus in Argos* series overall—is that political work is retrograde and ridiculous when it is not motivated by an understanding of overall purposes and relations of which it is a part. She urges us to look at what we are doing from a nearly cosmic overview, to develop the ability to see ourselves as drops on the windowpane of millenia.

Like this novel, the first and third books in this series provide an overview of Lessing's universe, supposedly composed of documents from the Canopean archives. The second and fourth

material want, Sirians suffer from "existential problem melancholia," symptomatic of a culture where technology has displaced the possibility of meaningful work, and that lacks a guiding intention.

In addition to the message that a nation's work must be in sync with a larger purpose than its own aggrandizement, *The Sirian Experiments* contains messages for leftists: there is the temptation in thinking you can rule, that a benevolent dictatorship can put things to right. Ambien learns what a nightmare that dream can become, and that to attempt social change without a cohesive spiritual and historical understanding is to make a mud-dle of it.

Beware illusion; beware personal power, Lessing told us in

satisfying: Lessing takes us so close to the spirit of the animals she invents for that planet and to its dedicated, tenacious people that we mourn each charmed species as it dies out. The real subject of the book, however, is not loss or tenacity, but Lessing's vision of the individual: we only make sense as part of an ordered collective universe consisting of other people, creatures and things:

...I, a smear of haze of particles on which light shines, I, a nothing, a conglomerate of vast spaces defined by a dance my mind cannot comprehend, am running forward...

It is this view that has upset many book reviewers. Reviewing *The Sentimental Agents* for the *New York Times*, for instance, Michiko Kakutani said, "From a

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Children of Violence series, Lessing has identified the disconnected, alienated individual as both the symptom and the source of human suffering, and produced fiction in which that individual reconnects to some collective unit: the Communist Party, a reconstructed family, a physically linked community. And though this theme has gained strength in her new work, nowhere does her devotion to the individual diminish. Indeed, the strength of the first, third and fifth books in this series is in the grace with which they move back and forth from the cosmic to closely observed personal interactions and internal struggles. In this latest novel, the agent Incent, innocent yet moved to action, as his name tells us, is painfully familiar as he alternately believes he can reform Shammatt. He gives speeches that whip up the workers to a frenzy that has no program to work toward.

Many reviewers imagine Lessing has "junked" the individual, and also see her as having abandoned politics as well. Given that *The Sirian Experiments* is about colonialism as much as anything else, and that this latest novel offers belly-laughs over Marxist rhetoric as well as a serious critique of it, their worries are obviously misspent.

It may be that John Leonard confuses Lessing's metaphorical landscape with her belief system. Lessing uses cosmic disaster as a metaphor for something like original sin, an explanation for the inexplicable pain and evil in the world. Leonard reads this to mean that Lessing would have us all abandon our hard work for change and wait for the planets to realign themselves.

But a look at Lessing's heroes makes it clear what she thinks we ought to be doing: "boulder-pushing," as she called it in *The Golden Notebook*. In *The Making of the Representative*, the main figure Doeg tirelessly provides food and keeps people awake in the face of the invading glacier. In the current book, the miner's shop steward and the woman serving beer in a pub who is given custody of the new food source are described with honest respect.

Kakutani's mention of "the totalitarian state" and Leonard's gratuitous reference to Stalin near the end of his review may provide a clue. Like the school-child's vision of Communism—a condition where all the walls are gray, everyone dresses alike and no one is allowed to go to Sunday School or have a new Easter basket—reviewers and others imagine that to move from an individual to a collective awareness means dissolving into sameness: all of us a uniform gray, singing the same song.

But if Lessing's parables teach us nothing else, they should make it apparent that collectivities also "suffer and conspire and are culpable," that the individual within a whole need be no less unique. Her reviewers apparently think we are somehow less alive if we are cooperative second violinists rather than soloists.

Fiction in which collectivities figure and promise what individual protagonists once did may give us not only a new novel but a map to a new attitude: a sense of collective work without the gray haze so much fiction—and individual work—falls into. ■

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INPRINT

FICTION

In a galaxy not so far away



ism? Will Incent remember what his business is, or will he continue to fancy himself a revolutionary hero?—a fancy that facilitates mob violence on Volyen.

But the real topics of the book are rhetoric and sentimentality; the real characters are 20th-century political workers.

Lessing takes us to these topics—and takes us back to ourselves as well—with a translucent satire that contrasts well with the bitter seriousness that characterized the earlier novels. A bare eight pages into the novel, Lessing takes us to the Hospital for Rhetorical Diseases, where political agents recover from attacks of Rhetoric. Though Lessing's writing is dry, the scene is dizzying. All our days, all our meetings, our hard-won collective processes seem ant-size: we view them from outside, with laughter and maybe tears.

One goal of Rhetorical hospi-

Doris Lessing

books are fables, also from the archives, which take place within just one culture, and embody and dramatize the lessons of the other novels.

Lessons of Sirius.

It is useful to consider this latest book against the third book, the one it is most closely aligned with. *The Sirian Experiments* is partly (always partly) about how a senior official of an imperialist, technologically advanced empire can come to understand the horror of colonialism, no matter how benevolently intended.

The official—Ambien—begins to question experiments where Sirius transports people from one planet to another, forces them to adapt to brutal conditions and leaves cultures vulnerable to evil.

Sirius experiments because it lacks any other purpose. Having conquered death, disease and

The Sirian Experiments. And now in this novel: beware false sentimentality; beware rhetoric.

The two fables, the second and fourth books of the series, carry other news. *The Marriages Between Zones 3, 4 & 5* is a layered allegory. Beyond being a good, readable story in an old-fashioned sort of way, it sheds a useful light on the interrelations between men and women, on women's culture under patriarchal oppression, on the strengths and limitations of cultures based on physicality and scarcity (Zone 4) as well as those based on a kind of feminine esthetic amid bounty (Zone 3).

The Making of the Representative for Planet 8, the other fable, describes how a formerly fruitful planet deals with an encroaching ice age, in which all sources of food and warmth freeze over and disappear. As a fairytale, it is too painful to be

The real topic is rhetoric and sentimentality in our politics.

humanistic point of view it is a prospect as chilling as that of the totalitarian state she so energetically satirizes in this book."

And about *The Making of the Representative*, John Leonard writes in the *New York Times Book Review*, "She seems...to be in the process of junking...the hard-won integrity of an 'I' that suffers and conspires and is culpable."

It is odd that many reviewers would imagine that Lessing has abandoned the awareness of individuals. In all her work, from *The Golden Notebook* to the

ENVIRONMENT

A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights

By Carol Van Strum
Sierra Club Books
288 pp., \$14.95

By Phillip Johnson

The story hit the headlines in the same week that this book arrived in the stores: Paul Merrell had won a six-year legal battle to stop herbicide spraying in the vicinity of his home in the Five Rivers area of Oregon's Coast Range. A veteran exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam, Merrell has been fighting herbicide use virtually full time since his return.

On April 12, in U.S. District Court, Judge Robert Belloni issued an injunction against the use of herbicides or pesticides by federal agencies within 25 miles of the boundaries of the Siuslaw National Forest until those agencies could complete their own studies of the health effects of herbicide use. (Until now, the Forest Service and other agencies simply relied on EPA registration of chemicals as a seal of approval.) The studies may take as long as five years, Merrell believes. The ultimate impact of the injunction is still in dispute, but it may well set a precedent for the entire Northwest, and possibly the nation as a whole. There will be appeals and further legal maneuvers, but Belloni's injunction may prove to be the most significant victory in the long war at home against the spraying of herbicides and pesticides.

So while Merrell was doused with champagne by supporters, his wife Carol Van Strum had her own reasons for celebrating—her chronicle of the herbicide movement in the U.S., *A Bitter Fog*, was just going up on bookstore shelves.

Herbicide movement.

The anti-herbicide movement has undergone a development that parallels the antinuclear movement. At the outset of both movements, protests were the result of emotional reactions to the idea that imperceptible poisons were circulating through the environment and undermining everyone's health. Those fears have scarcely lessened, but by now each movement has developed a small army of advocates who, motivated by that fear, have educated themselves in technical fields once the sole province of experts.

Moreover, both movements have gone beyond the health issues to question the basic economic system (and its scientific infrastructure) that created dependence on these technologies. In many minds, nuclear power and herbicides are potential economic disasters that would be worthy of fierce opposition even if radiation and dioxin were as safe as mother's milk (as opposed to being in mother's milk).



The rise of the antiherbicide movement parallels the antinuclear movement in its shift from emotional reactions to broader analysis.

Antiherbicide movement is coming of age

It addresses the question of legal rights.

Van Strum's own story in part reflects this development. She began protesting in 1975, after her children were inadvertently hosed by a county truck spraying 2,4,5-T. She did a great deal of research to uncover the nature of the phenoxy herbicides. She went on to help in founding Citizens Against Toxic Sprays (CATS), the vanguard group in the national movement, which in 1977 won the first major court victory against herbicide use in national forests. The victory proved fleeting, and the volunteers behind CATS eventually burned out, but not before passing the torch to the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, which

continues to do remarkably effective work as an organizing force and clearinghouse.

Meanwhile, Van Strum spent years interviewing dozens of anti herbicide activists, of which *A Bitter Fog* is the record. (The interview with one of those activists, Paul Merrell, led to a battlefield romance.) And while the book gives a great deal of space to the immediate, imputed health effects of 2,4,5-T, 2,4-D and the rest of the herbicidal arsenal, Van Strum pushes further, to discuss and challenge the system that produced them.

A great deal of the book is taken up with the testimony of those who believe that they have been damaged by herbicides, and those who have devoted themselves to combating the use of sprays. Van Strum makes full use of the exhaustive files of anecdotal reports the anti-herbicide forces have compiled over the years, and mounts what would seem to the ordinary reader to be

a convincing case that these toxins are doing unacceptable harm. But as Van Strum, a veteran of lengthy court proceedings, knows full well, circumstantial evidence is scorned by the practitioners of the scientific method. Conditions in the real (i.e., non-laboratory) world, in which we are all awash daily in a bewildering array of natural and human-made substances, can never replicate the purity of the laboratory. And so the experiences of real people with herbicides or other toxic chemicals can never achieve the status of uniformly repeatable experiments required under the scientific method. Ergo, in the minds of most agency heads, corporate chiefs and lawyers, the evidence against toxic sprays is merely "circumstantial" and therefore dismissable.

Much of *A Bitter Fog* is a passionate protest against this system, under which herbicides are innocent until proven guilty. (It's actually a little more complicated than that. In formal terms, it's the other way around. But EPA registration is considered a presumption of innocence, and the EPA relies on manufacturers' reports and the work of testing labs whose results, as Van Strum documents, are often completely fraudulent. Once a chemical is registered, then it is up to opponents to marshal "scientific proof" that it is harmful.)

The basic question underlying so many public health controversies is this: when is enough circumstantial evidence enough? As Van Strum writes, "In strict scientific terms, no study of human effects from field use of toxic chemicals can ever be conclusive." All she can do, all any herbicide activist can do, is pile up the instances of two-headed chicks, withered gardens, spontaneous abortions, epidemic diseases and disabled workers. But ultimately, protection from the imponderable impacts of chemicals on air, water and food can only come through a redefinition

of legal rights or a fundamental change in the system.

Van Strum makes her contribution to the latter by pointing to the evidence that in most cases herbicides don't really do any good, even from the standpoint of industrial forestry. They are often sprayed where they aren't needed. They are ineffective against many of the targeted "weed" species—and those "weeds" that they do destroy play vital roles in replenishing the soil and thus ensuring the long-term productivity of forest lands. The use of herbicides is a classic case of capitalism's inherent drive toward the taking of short-term (and often delusory) profit at the expense of greater long-term gain.

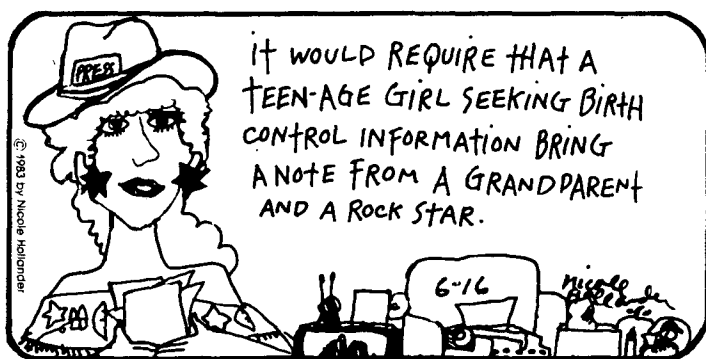
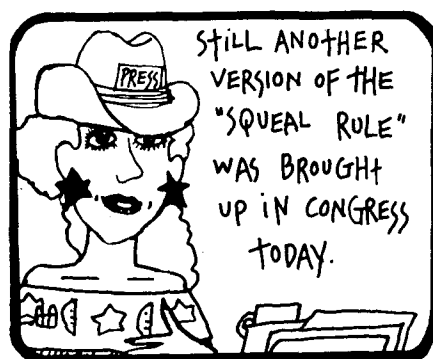
Van Strum also addresses the question of legal rights with a specific proposal. She argues for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to "informed consent" on the part of all citizens before they are subjected to any kind of toxic chemical in the environment. Although this may strike some readers as naive and unworkable, Van Strum argues that even if such an amendment could never reach final passage, it could serve the same function as the EPA: focusing attention on the issue and mobilizing a constituency.

Whether or not proposing a constitutional amendment is a useful approach, Van Strum has at least forced consideration of another basic question: just what is the relationship between democracy and the use of toxic chemicals for private gain in the common environment? *A Bitter Fog* contributes greatly to the "informed discretion" of a citizenry that eventually will have to choose between the "right" to be free from poison—or simply free from fear of poisoning—and the "right" to use the world as a laboratory.

Phillip Johnson is an Oregon freelance writer who specializes in environmental reporting.

Sylvia

by Nicole Hollander



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

USSR strategy seen without Cold War bias

Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis

By Fred Halliday
Institute for Policy Studies,
143 pp., \$4.95 (paper)

By Jeff Frieden

Opposition to resurgent U.S. militarism has grown, yet only a handful of left authors have gone beyond stock phrases to a serious examination of U.S. foreign policy and its international context.

Alan Wolfe, Seymour Melman and others concentrate on the internal roots of American bellicosity. Fred Kaplan, Andrew Cockburn and the Washington-based Center for Defense Information show the dishonesty and inaccuracy of mainstream "descriptions" of the Soviet-American military balance. Fred Halliday's *Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis* is an important complement to those others: a detailed, thoughtful and reasoned interpretation of Soviet foreign policy—the alleged cause of all the furor—in an area of great strategic and economic importance.

The State Department explanation of Soviet policy in the "arc of crisis" is straightforward: since the early '70s, the USSR has instigated a series of Communist takeovers and fomented unrest. Even where (as in Iran) the Soviet role seems minimal, the Soviets have taken advantage of unrest to project their geo-strategic power—or have used "proxies" like the PLO to do their dirty work. More generally, the State Department argues, the Soviet Union has persistently violated the rules of civilized international behavior and thus brought U.S.-Soviet detente crashing down. Indeed, Soviet expansionism has been facilitated by years of American foreign-policy cowardice. As Ronald Reagan has said, "The Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on. If they weren't engaged in this game of dominoes there wouldn't be any hot spots in the world."

Four crisis countries.

Halliday evaluates this Cold War catechism on its own terms and convincingly refutes it. First he examines the basis of Soviet foreign policy, then he looks at Soviet policy in the Middle East and the "four crisis countries"—Iran, Afghanistan, South Yemen and Ethiopia.

Soviet foreign policy, Halliday argues, has several general and consistent aims. The Soviets believe that capitalism is doomed and communism fated to succeed it. They also have a strong ideological and practical commitment to regimes they consider socialist. Yet this commitment to revolution is dependent upon other Soviet goals. The USSR is extremely sensitive to real or potential threats to its security. It also desires a reliable global military capability and is willing to develop cordial diplomatic relations with virtually any state, no matter how reactionary. Similarly, the Soviets are fonder of stability than of revolution; stability on their borders means security, while revolutions can be unre-

dictable (witness China). And Soviet resources are far more limited than the West's—which leads to a longing, in Halliday's words, to "achieve a permanent working relationship with the West: to avert war, to manage crisis situations and to derive maximum support for their own economic development program."

No sterling success.

The Soviet record in the Third World is hardly one of sterling successes or wanton subversion. They have been allied with extremely reactionary regimes (Argentina, Amin's Uganda) and have been thrown out on their ears when the West has offered unstable Third World "progressive" states a better deal (Egypt, Somalia).

Halliday's descriptions of Iran, Afghanistan, South Yemen and Ethiopia—based on his extensive coverage of those areas—are a superb antidote to the domino demonology of Brzezinski, Haig and their successors.

The only significant external pressure on Iran and Ethiopia came from Washington. "Popular explosions had the ferocity they did partly because of long years of repression, for which the United States bears much responsibility," Halliday argues.

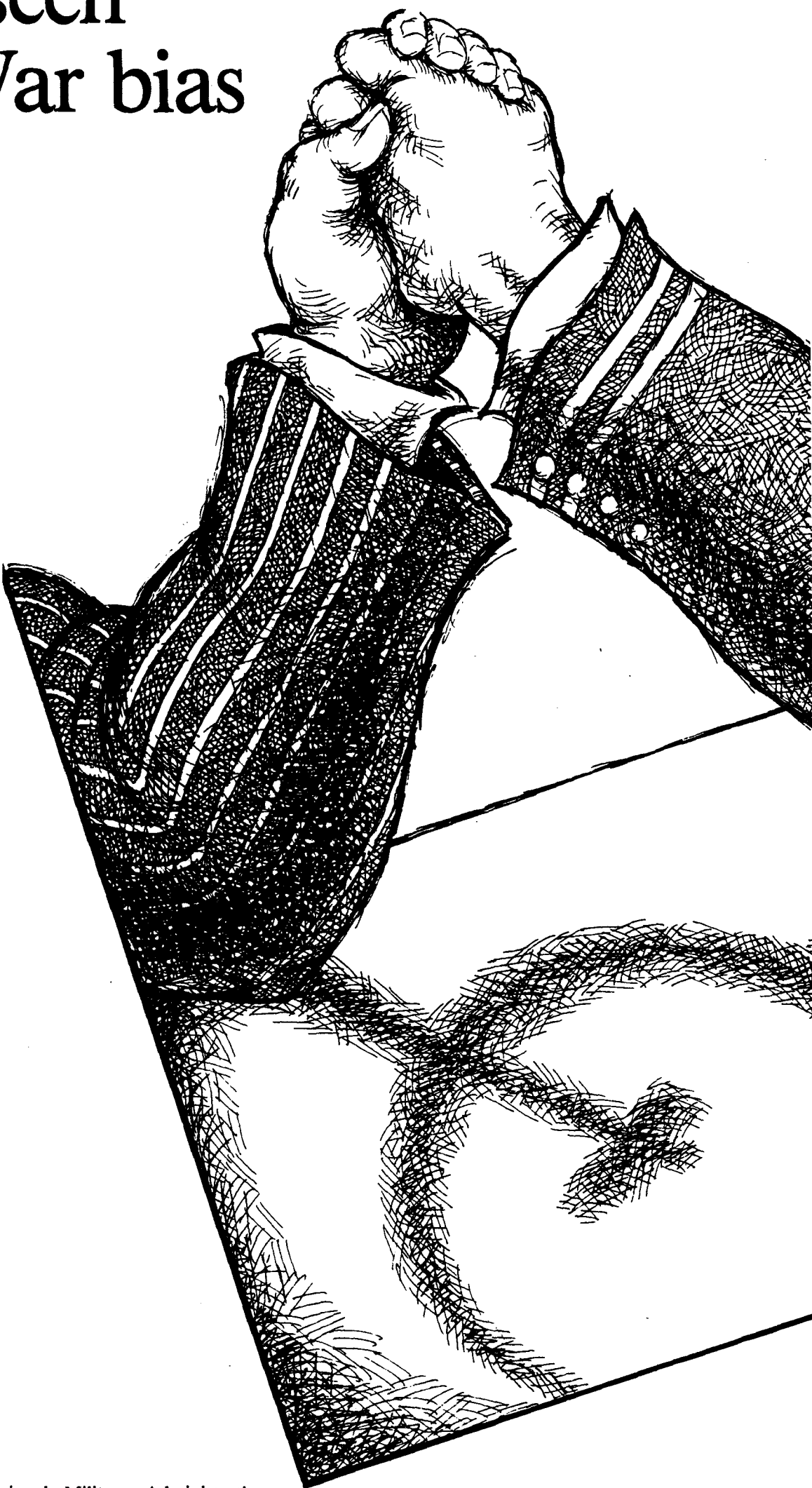
Internal conflicts.

Indeed, in all four cases, "the fundamental changes were primarily due to the evolution of identifiable internal conflicts." The Iranian revolution was a deep-rooted and immensely popular political, social, cultural and religious reaction to 25 years of rule by the U.S.-supported Shah. The Khomeini regime is profoundly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist—despite Soviet efforts to curry favor. So it is unclear whether the U.S.' "loss" will be Russia's "gain."

In Afghanistan, the 1978 coup that brought a small pro-Moscow grouping to power was primarily a reaction to foreign interference—in this case, the Shah's attempts to buy off the Daud regime. The coup came as a surprise to the Soviets, and they soon found themselves with an intractable ally with little popular support in its own country. Soviet intervention in December 1979 was a reluctant attempt to keep a previously established pro-Soviet regime in power—not an annexationist foray toward the Persian Gulf.

South Yemen, independent since 1967, has been oriented toward the USSR since 1969. In the mid-'70s, the Saudis began making overtures toward the regime, attempting to capitalize on divergences within the ruling National Liberation Front. In June 1978 the pro-Saudi faction attempted a coup, which failed. South Yemen moved marginally closer to the USSR, yet Soviet influence there is still limited.

Ethiopia was a privileged American fiefdom until 1974, when the army and a popular movement based in the cities overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. Since then a nationalistic Provis-



ional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) has ruled the country, undertaking an impressive series of social reforms. In 1977 Somalia, then a Soviet client, invaded Ethiopia. The U.S. refused to supply Ethiopia with arms and may indeed have encouraged the invasion. The PMAC turned to the Soviets, who tried to control the Somalis and finally sided with the Ethiopians. In retaliation the Soviets were expelled from Somalia. The PMAC is an ally of USSR, but is by no means in the Russians' pocket, as their long-standing support for Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe (the Soviets backed Joshua Nkomo) indicates.

U.S. line refuted.

This book operates on several levels. One line of argument is a clear-cut refutation of the U.S. "line" on Soviet foreign policies. On another level, *Soviet Policy in*

The USSR helps some Third World revolutions but also backs some of the most barbaric of regimes.

the Arc of Crisis offers a sophisticated argument with those on the left who have surrendered to knee-jerk anti-Sovietism or, for that matter, to knee-jerk pro-Sovietism. The USSR has been a major left force in world politics, as well as a valuable supporter of

some Third World revolutions. Yet the Soviets have also supported some of the most barbaric of regimes for purely opportunistic reasons. The USSR is not, Halliday argues, an imperialist power in any meaningful sense. He is also inclined to believe that "the Soviet Union has done too little, rather than too much, to assist the liberation of the Middle East."

Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis is valuable ammunition for the growing peace and anti-interventionist movement. It provides historical accuracy, analytical clarity and political conclusions that will sharpen and strengthen the case of Americans who want to get and keep the U.S. out of the Middle East. ■

Jeff Frieden has written on international politics and U.S.-Soviet relations for *The Nation* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

ART **ENTERTAINMENT**

Robert G. Wainwright/Social Concern

ART

Passionate views of the '30s

By Lucy Lippard

"For better or worse, there's been no decade in this century like the '30s for such intense examination of the moral function of the arts."

—Barry Wallenstein

The American Book Review

There have been few decades in this century as needful of "intense examination of the moral function of the arts" as the '80s. Witness the devaluation even of the word morality. Not that leftist cultural groups haven't been trying, but there's nothing like a little perspective, which is what the current revival of interest in the art of the '30s seems to be providing. As cultural activists, we have the dimmest of pictures of our own history and the works themselves have been buried in museum basements or even resold. So a recent exhibition like Patricia Hills' "Social Concern and Urban Realism: American Painting of the 1930s" at New York's Gallery 1199 (a Bread and Roses project of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers) is particularly important today. It is also a labor of loving intelligence.

The show is alternately depressing and exhilarating: depressing, because the subject matter was unemployment, lynchings, war, fascism, strike breaking and depression with a large and small "d"; exhilarating because there is such a variety and energy in it, as well as a measure of unfounded optimism about the future. The catalog includes a reminiscence by painter Raphael Soyer about the New York John Reed Club, Artists Union, Artists Congress and the WPA that credits political involvement with offering "an outlet from my own self-involvement."

The '30s, says Soyer, were "economically difficult times, but spiritually exhilarating.... We had hopes that when fascism and Nazism would be overcome we would have a good world. We had no idea of what would follow, that the nuclear age would be upon us."

The '30s revival is of course clearly connected to political parallels—depression, inflation, edge-of-war hysteria and/or passivity. Anxiety in today's art is often expressed by jagged, des-

perate, two-dimensional graphics—a deliberate crudity that is a hybrid of German Expressionism and the sleeziest periphery of "pop" culture. Given the evidence of the 1199 show and other resurrections from the '30s, anxiety then was most often expressed in a weighty, modelled, solemn style that reflected boredom, hopelessness, stasis—the process of waiting, waiting for a job, for relief, for the pink slip, waiting for things to get better. Even images where resistance

and anger replaced despair and resignation were literally "grounded" in sculptural solidity. Sources range from Honore Daumier to the Mexican muralists to the cult of the machine, exemplified by the tubular bodies of Fernand Leger, who was in the U.S. in the '30s and was an editor of *Art Front*.

Fifty years ago, artists were not afraid to be sentimental, earnest, even trite, if they felt their message was being conveyed to an oversimplified "masses." To-

"The Hitchhiker"

day, even activists are wary of emotion and tread a delicate line between irony and ambiguity. Most '80s artists have middle-class backgrounds, whereas in the '30s most socially concerned artists emerged from the same backgrounds they painted about. As Milton Brown said of William Gropper, "His picture of our world was not a pleasant one. Why should it have been? The images of his youth stayed with him.... He knew whom and how to hate as did Daumier before him."

I wonder how much this class difference is reflected in the stylistic similarities and differences. The working-class artist's anger was rooted in realism, while today's young artist, whose success is inextricably attached to professional contacts and degrees from art school, may feel the anger of social betrayal—betrayal of self rather than of class interests. David Schapiro has written that most '30s artists were part of the intelligentsia but not intellectuals—even if they belonged to a Marxist party, their Marxism "tended to be uncomplicated by knowledge of Marxist theory." Soyer recalls Meyer Schapiro saying, "No *Kapital* on art has yet been written," as true today as it was then. Though such a vision may have faded, more young progressive artists have read Marx now than had in the '60s, thanks, paradoxically, to conceptual art as well as to radical educators. In those days, painting was still seen as an effective vehicle for both social concern and involvement. Today we must acknowledge, without value judgment, that the compassionate basis of social concern differs from the passionate basis of social activism.

On esthetic grounds, my favorite work in this show was a small painting by Jacob Hirsch called *Landscape with Tear Gas*—a close aerial view of a factory on flat land, protesting crowds being broken up by cops in the foreground, the whole glowing ominously with tones of red and brown. (This was one of a number of picket line images—a subject rarely treated in the '80s, despite the important role played

FILM

From Trenton with love, class

By Pat Aufderheide

The mythical '60s—you know, love beads and San Francisco and antiwar marches and the Beatles—have a populist charm. It was a moment when rebellious youth—truth and beauty—was pitted against the deadly and dull Establishment.

But the '60s was a different experience for difference classes and races and regions in the U.S., and in *Baby It's You* John Sayles has built a love story around that fact. Because he's such a pro at an unpretentious populist film style (this is the man who brought you low-budget independents *Return of the Secaucus Seven* and *Lianna* as well as the screenplays for such films as *Alligator* and *The Howling*), Sayles carries off a rare challenge: to make class conflict into carnal know-

ledge, to make an entertaining Saturday-night-out movie that doesn't compromise its social insights.

"High school is the last time most people will come into daily contact with people who aren't in their social class," Sayles told me in a recent interview. "It's a uniquely democratic place that way." That was what attracted him to producer Amy Robinson's story idea, from which he wrote the screenplay and directed *Baby It's You*.

Jill Rosen (Rosanna Arquette) is a doctor's daughter in Trenton, N.J.—a nice Jewish girl with the lead role in the class play, her own phone, doting liberal parents and a gaggle of girlfriends. "Sheik" (Vincent Spano) is an Italian tough whose mother slaves and prays for him and whose father cuffs him. He only drops into school between hus-

tling and bar-hopping, just long enough to impress the kids with his grown-up clothes and to romance Jill.

At first it doesn't work—she can't believe his insolence. But then she falls for his bad-boy romance. The more her teachers and parents murmur cautions and the more her girlfriends screech in titillated shock, the more she's intrigued.

Prom night brings this high-school affair to an end. He splits for Miami and dreams of a singing career "like Frank Sinatra"; she goes off to Sarah Lawrence, discovering that to the ever-so-chic girls there she's only a hick from a factory town ("Trenton Makes, the World Takes," as the sign on a bridge reads in one scene). But she also knows she's not going back, and her decision to master the idioms of elite college '60s subculture cuts Sheik out of her future. All the violence and passion of their personal lives can't change that. She comes to terms with the fact of privilege and won't give it up.

The distinctions between these two class-crossed lovers are drawn meticulously, and they are blended well in art direction,

mise-en-scene and dialog. She's got her own car, but in a scene where he abducts her after being snubbed, he has to borrow one that's due back by midnight. When she goes to college she turns that episode into a humiliating anecdote—turning her Trenton past, and Sheik, into a joke for preppies. Meanwhile, he cherishes his mementos of her in a private altar to their high school days: When she comes to Miami to visit him, he thrills to the Fountainebleu Hotel's gaudy splendor. She's not impressed—her parents used to take her to the Fountainebleu when she was little. His friends are pasty-faced and smokey-voiced; her new college friends are paralyzingly self-possessed and ironically controlled. When she goes away to college she learns to dress down; he gets himself a tuxedo.

The course of this fluke romance offers an understanding of what being middle class in the U.S. means: to have, to be, the future. His aspirations are entirely within the world as it is—good clothes, a pretty wife, glamorous job. And they are all out of his grasp; he howls near the end,

by demonstrations. Who has painted Solidarity Day or the June 12 disarmament rally? Photography has become the recorder.) I was also moved by Philip Evergood's classic *Through the Mill*, Lily Furedi's coolly luminous *Subway* (a favorite subject for showing class mixes), Arthur Durston's inventive triple portrait in semi-Cubist style (*Industry*), Katherine Schmidt's and Joseph Delaney's portraits of dignity in pathos, Allan Rohan Crite's *School's Out*—a bustling street scene. Robert Gwathmey's *Hitchhikers* stood out as a breezy reminder of life and color while retaining its edge as desperate men try to flag rides against a backdrop of beaming billboard beauties.

Both women and black artists are conscientiously well represented in number and quality. Alice Neel's searing portraits and Jacob Lawrence's witty interior stand out. Mervyn Jules' *Bread* (an elongated arm reaching through a broken window, the desirable, organic form of the bread contrasted to that of the brick necessary for its acquisition) is a touching example of what he called "social expressionism." There's also an amazing, if lurid, circular painting by Philip Guston, best known as an abstract expressionist and then as a founder of "new image painting" in the late '70s. *Bombardment* (the Spanish Civil War),

makes the viewer into the bomb's target as she or he is drawn into a central vortex of writhing, Italianate bodies. And there is a fluid, Daumieresque Thomas Hart Benton *Strikebreakers*, and strong work by Shahn, Gropper, the Soyer brothers, Bishop, Levin, Marsh, Refregier....

I hate reviewing group shows when many readers can't go see the work and illustration is drastically limited. (Even those photos available for reproduction here are "softer" than the exhibition's general political tone.) But in this case I can refer you to the exemplary catalog with the texts by Soyer and Hills (the latter a model of historical clarity unmarred by rhetoric) and brief essays on each artist by Hills' students at Boston University (available from the BU Art Gallery, 855 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, Mass. 02215). The show is also being traveled. (In the next year, it is scheduled for showings in Boston, Anchorage, Youngstown, West Palm Beach and Laurel, Miss.) by the American Federation of Arts. Gallery 1199 was too small even for this modest selection. I suppose it's too much to hope for, given the museums' dependence on corporate support, that this subject will soon be covered full-scale. The work may be dated in some ways, but it's all too timely in others. ■ *Lucy Lippard is an art critic for the Village Voice.*



"Relief Blues," a 1937 painting by O. Louis Guglielmi

"I'll never be anybody." Her aspirations look beyond the existing terms of Trenton or even Sarah Lawrence; in pursuit of individual expression and excellence. She will have the time and skills to strive for both. The film's tension lies in the characters finally asserting their class roles in their most personal decisions—like who to go to bed with, whose feelings to hurt, whose favor to curry.

Too neat.

It's a neat intertwining of the personal and the social—in fact, maybe a little too neat. For all the movie's winsomeness, it has a klunky quality. Although the film heats up once the romance is underway, *Baby It's You* is hard to settle into, and you have to take the spark of their mutual attraction pretty much on faith. The exposition is bald and scenes are acted out in a talky way. There are structural crudities, too. The film comes in two parts—an hour of high school and an hour of college. But the beginning doesn't hint that the second hour will cover another whole year, so the efficiency of opening scenes strikes one as more abrupt than it might.

However, there are the typical strengths of a Sayles screenplay

as well. Sayles assumes our interest in the characters and makes them the center of their story without making them exceptional figures in the social landscape. The dialog doesn't suffer from the yattering TV-like pace of a film like *American Graffiti*; these kids are believably inarticulate and clumsy in their come-ons. The scenes deliver a gritty sense of the anxiety and desire of adolescence rather than the randy yuks of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

Sayles makes the most of his screenplay, and the directing job here seems to show that the directorial weaknesses in *Lianna* and *Secaucus Seven* resulted from their low budgets. (Robinson raised \$2.9 million for this film, which Paramount picked up; that's still fabulously low by Hollywood terms, since the average production cost alone of a studio-backed film is \$11 million. But \$2.9 million is also more than four times what *Lianna* cost.) His longstanding choice to emphasize ensemble acting in a low-budget drama works well here—there was money for retakes, for second cameras and for set design.

Sayles' sensitivity to the social and historical terms of the old-fashioned story he tells is what

makes this romance into a special story. This isn't "the '60s," but someone's personal 1967. The specifics, however, only heighten one's own associations with the era. The little things are right—even, sometimes, embarrassing, at least to a '60s survivor. That white lipstick we all loved in my high school, those ugly patterned nylons and the knobby knees that went with miniskirts are there. No one talks about Vietnam; it's before the galvanizing year 1968, after which it became not only right but fashionable

John Sayles creates more plausible characters and episodes than most directors with five times the budget.

among the young to protest.

The way in which women's roles were in crisis is woven into the story without lecturing. In high school the girls can still sing, "Going to the chapel and we're gonna get married" on their way to school. Once Jill leaves home, though, she knows she won't get married and settle down, but she doesn't have a clue of her options. The sexual revolution provides no comforting answers (a fratman heralds her at a mixer with, "Hi, ya wanna fuck?...I'm a senior"). And the prospect of being her own person is a terrifying one without the social framework to go with it.

Baby It's You, even with its graceless moments, creates more plausible characters and episodes from an era than most movies made with five times its budget. If the neighborhood movie screens were populated with movies like this, rather than with hardware spectacles and jiggly-cute comedies, maybe moviegoing would come back as a regular evening's entertainment, even a weekly habit. You'd go to the movies not for a knock-out pill from the pain of daily life, but for remembrance, for acquaintance and maybe for a voyage into someone else's American dream. ■

LATIN MUSIC



Mercedes Sosa

nos Aires. As a folksinger in the most urbane and Europeanized of Latin nations, she fought a long uphill battle for recognition of her art. She discovered the work of two seminal composers who combined songs of social protest with traditional folklore: Argentina's Atahualpa Yupanqui and Chile's Violeta Parra. Parra's poignant "Gracias a la Vida" (Thanks to Life) is still the centerpiece of every Sosa concert. She also began to sing the songs of a new generation of musicians, such as Victor Jara of Chile, Daniel Viglietti or Uruguay, Tejada Gomez, Armando and Cesar Isella of Argentina.

Days of nightmare.

By 1973 she had recorded 16 albums, sung on every television channel in Argentina, toured Latin America, Europe, the U.S. and the USSR. But that year the southern cone of the Americas darkened. A military coup in Chile brought the deaths of Victor Jara and Pablo Neruda and sent all the folksingers who had supported the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende into exile. And by 1976 the generals had taken Argentina and the long nights of disappearances had begun.

In a posthumous letter to her father Ernesto, who died in 1972, Sosa recalls those years. "Papa, you left us before the days of nightmare became an eternity. Before we started living with fear. People learn how to live with fear, until, suddenly, they don't fear anymore...because there are things that go beyond fear."

"We are learning that things are not resolved by dictatorships, that they are resolved by democracy.... We are learning that to have a democracy does not mean to have peace. That peace is hard work, it is something we have to fight for every day. That the manufacturers of death do not rest."

Mercedes Sosa has returned to the U.S. with hope for the future. She performs with a trio that includes Omar Espinoza on guitar and charango (a tiny Andean guitar made from the shell of an armadillo), Domingo Cura on Caribbean conga and the native bombo (a big drum played with a felt hammer and drumstick) and Jose Luis Castaneira de Dios on electric bass.

Sosa's repertoire has become increasingly diverse. She includes, for example, a samba by Chico Buarque de Holanda of Brazil, and the surrealist poetry of Cuban balladeer Silvio Rodriguez's "Sueno con Serpientes" (Dream with Serpents). But she seems happiest when she hunkers down with the bombo under her arm to sing the wild bagualas and chacareras and the elegant, dramatic zambas of the Argentinian countryside. She finishes thunderously—and with a grin.

Sosa's New York concert was sponsored by the Latin American Workshop and dedicated to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Afterwards, she took part with Pete Seeger in the opening of the Taller's new Violeta Parra-Woody Guthrie auditorium, a symbol of the solidarity of singers in the Americas. ■

Bob Norman, a musician and writer, is a former editor of Sing Out magazine and works at the North America Committee on Latin America.

Opera

Continued from page 12

("Peace is a wonderful thing... I'm referring to inner peace," he says before conceding the war).

Rev. Salvation is a member of the anti-union "Liberty Committee" founded by Mr. Mister. This early version of the Moral Majority finds its members under arrest by mistake at the start of the opera. The Liberty Committee sits in night court awaiting rescue by Mr. Mister, while scenes of union harassment are re-enacted in songs ranging from vaudeville numbers to darker, Brechtian complaints about injustice.

It was Bertolt Brecht who led Blitzstein to write his opera during the Depression. Blitzstein had already heard *The Threepenny Opera* when he played some of his own songs for Brecht. One song about prostitution ("A Nickel under the Foot," sung brilliantly by Patti LuPone in the revival) impressed Brecht so much that he advised the composer to write a whole opera about different forms of prostitution. The result was *The Cradle Will Rock*.

Most of the forms of prostitution depicted in the opera continue today. Artists still vie for the patronage of the wealthy, as they do in Blitzstein's opera, agreeing to "be blind for art's sake," and for the sake of Mrs. Mister's money. Corporations have now perhaps replaced individual millionaires as the chief buyers of art and political influence. If so, this is one of several aspects of the opera that has become obsolete with the passage of time. Blitzstein's satire focuses on a single villain, and is naive insofar as it does not call attention to the corporate entities that would absolve Mr. Mister of personal responsibility for his crimes today.

The Cradle Will Rock concludes with an optimistic hymn to the strength of unions. Larry Foreman, a persecuted

union spokesperson, rejects Mr. Mister's invitation to sell out and sings the stirring title song, informing the rich man that: "You can't stop the weather/ for all your dough./ For when the wind blows/ the cradle will rock." This fiery song—quite the opposite of a lullaby about cradles—suggests that unions will eventually triumph over men of wealth. The victory promised in 1937 has not yet been fully achieved, however; so perhaps a few references to recent union concessions in collective bargaining should be added to the opera to bring it up to date.

First produced at a time of massive labor strikes in the U.S., Blitzstein's opera remains a moving and entertaining model of popular leftist theater responding to social discontent.

The opera's stylistic affinity with poli-

tical cartoons is well-served by John Houseman's simple staging and the gifted ensemble's acting. Presented in a small, 300-seat house in New York, the production represents a welcome alternative to grandiose, expensive Broadway musicals. With almost no scenery and only a single piano for its orchestra, its unamplified singing and the colloquial, Runyonesque dialog evoke a sense of intimacy and candor quite suitable for this folktale's attack on impersonal men at the top.

Toward the end of Blitzstein's opera, one song asks how many times we must hear "the same old story." How long, "brother, does it take to make you wise?" At least one more time, is the answer, as the cradle continues to rock. ■

Joel Schechter teaches at the Yale School of Drama.

Dyllan

Continued from page 13

unsympathetic, it is just that you need a procedure, a grievance process, before you can complain, he tells her.

When bargaining talks stall and it is discovered that management has betrayed its promises to cooperate, Lightnin' rebels. Lineman is begging at the bargaining table, she says, despite all his know-how. He retorts that she hasn't been able to get enough worker support so that he can do anything else. They are both right, of course: Lineman, in knowing you can only get what you have the power to get; Lightnin', in knowing it is individual incidents of human suffering—a soap opera, if you will—that spark a collective response.

A union ovation.

The Washington audience, including many union members, responded enthusiastically to the play's jokes and gave Dyllan and Paul Meacham, who plays Lineman, a standing ovation. For outsiders, the play affirms why unions are

necessary: the woman who couldn't get time off to be with her dying child is someone Dyllan interviewed, along with hundreds of other workers, before she wrote the play.

Despite the ovation, however, the play runs into problems. It is a vehicle for humane ideas in which the human beings themselves often take a back seat. Too much of the time is spent making speeches about the problems of organizing and bargaining, instead of acting them out. This is somewhat ironic, given Lightnin's constant references to the daily problems of everyday people.

Dyllan compensates by using slide portraits of CWA workers and of Fran Smith, one of the union's pioneers, but it is not enough to make up for the lack of characterization in the two people on stage. The play uses roleplaying in a clever way to add characters who do not appear on their own, but it calls attention to the overall lack of character development. Meacham, for example, is convincing portraying Lightnin's cruel floorman

in a bit of roleplaying, but his own Lineman is pale by comparison.

Since the heavies are never on stage in their own right, the source of the conflict between Lineman and Lightnin' are obscured. Management is their catalyst. Management is their nemesis. But only in the play's final moments can we feel the power of their opponent to drive a wedge between the two of them. A real confrontation with management would have added dramatic tension to the conflict between the union allies and given more impact to their triumph.

However, when Lightnin' talks about her husband, children and her pain in earning her nickname at the plant (she beat her baby in response to pressure to work faster, faster, faster), there is a flash of insight into the life of a woman who intrigues us.

Dyllan might have developed this woman's story in proving her point that it is the human being in the predicament that interests people more than the tactical ideas used to resolve the problem.

Adding to this misfortune is Meacham's inability to capitalize on the few scenes where Lineman tells us about himself and the father he was so ashamed of that he hid in a closet during the old man's funeral. Self-conscious and unable to conjure up the real emotions of Lineman's experiences, they were lost to the audience as well.

None of this should discourage dramatizations of the union movement, however. The standing ovation *Lineman and Sweet Lightnin'* received proves the hunger for this kind of dramatic presentation. Indeed, a surge in union-inspired theater may be in the offing. It has happened before.

Labor theater as genre.

Twenty-two hundred plays about unions, workers, unemployment and life in company towns were produced by the Federal Theater Project, all in a four-year period. Spawned by the Works Progress Administration in the '30s, the Theater Project took plays to the parks, to the backs of flatbed trucks and onto the city sidewalks when playhouses weren't available.

Although few worker plays have been produced since the Project ended in 1939, the genre has managed to survive. *Pins and Needles*, one of the best known and most successful of the worker plays, has had staying power. First produced in the '30s by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, it was revived on Broadway in the '40s and again in the '60s. The United Farm Workers started a theater company to dramatize the stories of grapeworkers in the '60s, and the Hospital Workers Local 1199 has produced skits and musicals as part of its well known Bread and Roses arts project.

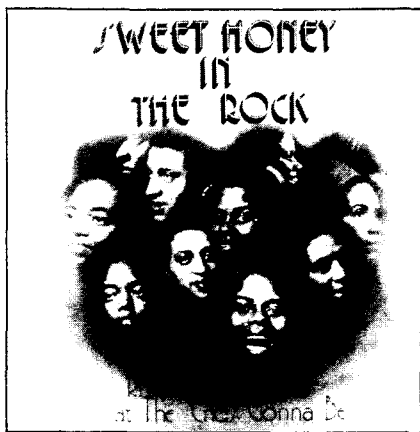
One of the more controversial plays of the '30s and "America's first proletarian opera," *Cradle Will Rock* is appearing in New York (see story on page 12). *Lineman and Sweet Lightnin'* also is scheduled to run in New York during Labor Day weekend. Meanwhile, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union may soon commission Dyllan to write a new play.

Marie France covers the performing arts in Washington, D.C.

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os, speaking at one-day conference on U.S.-Israeli Involvement in Central America: The Arms Connection. DePaul University, 25 E. Jackson. Registration: 10:30 a.m. Admission \$4. For more information, call (312) 987-1830.

ERIE, PA

June 10, 11, 12

Establishing a national organization of unemployed committees and planning a summer strategy are the aims of the Unemployed National Conference. Mortgage foreclosures, health care and plant closings are among the many issues to be addressed in a series of workshops and meetings. A limited number of full and partial scholarships are available. The conference begins with registration at 12:00 noon on Friday, June 10 at Mercyhurst College, Erie, Pa. For more information contact the Erie County Unemployed Council 245 East 8th St., Erie, PA 16503. (814) 456-2872.

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King

Continued from page 24

thousands of soldiers who the government used as guinea pigs during 17 years of testing nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. He swears that when the blast went off he "could see the bones in both my hands." Assured that "the risks were all acceptable," he asks ironically, "Acceptable to who?"

King uses his voice to good effect—a baritone capable of projecting a rich range of emotion, from the boilerman's optimism to the soldier's wonderment at his betrayal. It is a voice capable of extra-

ordinary delicacy, which treats sometimes painful situations without exploiting them.

Charlie King wasn't always a guitar-playing radical. Hailing from a Boston Irish Catholic background, he played a ukelele in high school and also campaigned for Barry Goldwater.

"I remember going to hear Phil Ochs in 1964, and the guy really scared me. I said to myself, 'This guy is a Communist. I mean, he's really a Communist.'"

In the meantime, he got tired of getting drowned out by the 12-string in the group he was playing in. "So I bought a hot Spanish guitar with only the four bottom strings and figured out that those strings were the same as the ukelele, and I played only those four for years. In fact, I still do, but that's a well kept secret.

"It was in my freshman year in college, 1965-66, that I started changing politically. My roommate was a gay Jewish civil rights worker from Alabama. I had this pattern where I would work hard in the fall semester and goof off in the spring and drop out, so once when I dropped out I spent a year and a half in eastern Kentucky in a poverty program. I left there to do two years of hospital work as a conscientious objector, finished college in the meantime, and went to live at the *Catholic Worker*, where I worked mainly on the farm workers' boycott."

The rest is, as they say, history. Among those who influenced his political thinking were Gandhi and Eugene Debs—the latter partly for his concern for democracy in the workplace.

Charlie prefers playing to labor aud-

iences. "It came from my frustration, growing out of the antinuclear movement, of constantly playing to people who looked the same—young white hippies with L.L. Bean equipment. It just got to feel like talking to myself." Labor audiences, he says, offer more diversity.

Asked who has influenced him musically, King reels off a dozen names, including Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Malvina Reynolds, Tom Paxton and Holly Near. With a twinkle in his eye, he adds another: Del Shannon, a top 40 songster from the '50s. "I'm still trying to rewrite 'Runaway' into a political song."

David Morse is a Connecticut freelance writer whose work appears in a number of magazines, including *WIN* and *Monthly Review*.

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WHEN HE IS NOT working as a volunteer at the St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen in Norwich, Conn.—a blue-collar town of 45,000 that had seen its share of hard times before the Reagan cuts—Charlie King is making music, or stuffing envelopes to feed the network of political songwriters that he tends with one hand—metaphorically speaking—in the same unassuming way that he scoops lasagne onto the plates of the people who traipse past the counter each day.

Charlie King is a folk musician for the '80s. Armed with a six-string acoustic guitar and an iconoclastic wit, he whispers, bellows, square-dances and occasionally croons his way into the lives of factory workers, housewives, soldiers, anarchists and bureaucrats.

"I have no hopes that my music will bring me fame and fortune," he says. "But I don't feel like the music I do is going to go out of style. It was never—in a commercial sense—in style. Yet it has a kind of under-

Folksinger Charlie King is peeved at being called an anachronism.

ground existence; it's part of a popular folk idiom."

Despite the paucity of political music on the commercial airwaves, the general health of grassroots political music has never been better, particularly in New England—thanks in part to Charlie's efforts.

Songs for Freedom and Struggle (SFS) is a network of political musicians founded by Charlie five years ago, following a suggestion by Joann McGloin, that musicians in the region might benefit by getting together annually. Today, SFS has grown from a spindly organization involving a handful of musicians to an even spindlier organization involving more than 400. Members swap songs, mail each other cassettes and trade information about gigs and recording facilities. Somebody—usually Charlie—cranks out a mimeographed list of names and addresses, and at least once a year the songsters get together for a gathering that is characterized by creative anarchy. This year's event will be June 3-5 in Pine Bush, N.Y. For more details call (203) 887-3018 or (914) 744-3876.

Some topics for workshops are planned well in advance; others are invented on the spot and posted with felt markers, just before attendees begin forming into smaller groups. Workshops have ranged from "Adapting Traditional Materials" to "Relating to Cops," which bounced around techniques for dealing with individual police officers and discussed the need for shaping city ordinances favorable to street musicians. Wrapping up the whole shebang is a "round robin," in which everybody gets a turn to sing at least one song, and which traditionally lasts into the small hours of the morning.

SFS gatherings have pulled in well known musicians such as Holly Near, Meg Christian, Tom Paxton and Pete Seeger, and attracted

political songwriters from as far away as Canada and California; but it remains strongest on the East Coast and Midwest. Its membership is self-selecting, and consciously avoids the demarcations that tend to spring up between musicians who are "known," at least regionally, and those with neither a following nor a record to their names. Some are labor organizers, community activists or environmental lawyers, first—and only marginally musicians.

The crowd is overwhelmingly white and for the most part middle class—a fact that occasions some breast-beating and renewed efforts to attract black and Hispanic musicians to the fold. But it is understood too as a reminder of the economic and political realities that haunt the movement, as well as the society at large.

It is a group for whom the term "movement" retains currency. Perhaps because they see themselves as radical minstrels, as musician-organizers, as popularizers—and not as ideologues working within an orthodoxy—there is none of the intramural warfare that has split other sectors of the American left. They sing for disarmament, women's rights and gay rights, racial equality and rights for the elderly. They satirize U.S. intervention in El Salvador, the government's energy policy, the MX and Reaganomics.

If some guitar-strumming *Time* magazine reporter were to infiltrate an SFS gathering, he or she might pronounce it all "vaguely reminiscent of the '60s."

Which brings us back to Charlie King and his new album, which

grows out of all this. *Vaguely Reminiscent* (Rainbow Snake Records, P.O. Box 922, Greenfield, Mass. 01302) is Charlie's third album. His introduction to the title cut is an extremely funny satirical rap, which establishes the 35-year-old songwriter as a sharpshooter storyteller as well as singer. Peeved at the media's use of that phrase to discredit social protest in the '70s and '80s—decades that saw a presidency toppled, the birth of the antinuclear power movement and the gathering momentum of the women's movement—Charlie decided to "take their metaphor and beat it to death." The song parodies Bob Dylan's nasal rhymes and squeaky harmonica:

*What do all these protests mean?
Well my friend, Time magazine
explains they're vaguely reminis-
cent of the '60s.*

They're anachronistic fossils, atavistic apostles

*They can't hustle, they're still
twisting with the '60s.*

But Charlie is at his best when he's singing about ordinary people—picking out the extraordinary, sometimes heroic qualities in their lives, with a special gift for illuminating precisely the right details. In "The Dancing Boilerman," on his earlier album *Somebody's Story*, a factory maintenance engineer approaching retirement learns squaredancing at the YMCA and now checks the pressure while do-si-doing the boiler, "dancing the day shift away."

In another song on the same album an ex-soldier, dying of leukemia, tells the story of hundreds of

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